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**Cross Contextual Meaning Making: A Study of Children's Talk Within and Across
Literacy Contexts in One Multiage Classroom**

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the participants of this study who were inspirational readers, thinkers, and meaning makers.

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At the culmination of this study, I find myself indebted to the two teachers, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky, who welcomed me into their classrooms and allowed me to study their craft. I remain in awe of their dedication and commitment to designing spaces in which children are allowed to explore, deconstruct, and reconstruct their own ideas in ways that promote cognitive gains as well as social and emotional development. I also find myself grateful for the students and their parents who allowed me to collect and study the participating students' language. This gracious openness has afforded me the opportunity to better understand how meaning making occurs in relation to literature. It is my hope that this study will provide insight into the social construction of meaning so that educators might think about how to design spaces that are meaningful, satisfying, and accepting of all students attempts at making meaning.

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**Cross Contextual Meaning Making: A Study of Children's Talk Within and Across
Literacy Contexts in One Multiage Classroom**

Katie Elizabeth Peterson, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Supervisors: Nancy Roser and Jo Worthy

In this embedded case study, I examined and documented discussions of literature across two literacy contexts within one multiage classroom. Further, I explored the experiences of four focal students within and across the two contexts, highlighting the affordances of each space and considering the implications of tacit rules of participation for individual students. I employed ethnographic data collection methods including field notes, audio and video recordings, semi-structured interviews, and student and teacher created artifacts. Data analysis drew on constant comparative methods as well as traditions of interactive sociolinguistics. Drawing on sociocultural theories of learning and transactional theories of reading response, the study demonstrates the ways in which talk is used as a tool for meaning-making tasks including comprehension, argumentation, and identity construction. The study highlights the purposeful and strategic instructional moves made by the classroom teachers in discussion that facilitated more complete and complex interpretations of texts. The cases of the focal students illustrate the affordances of each context as well as demonstrating the ways in which responses to literature might be leveraged to claim identity positions within the classroom. The study cultivates

deeper understanding about the importance of individual contributions within discussion contexts, as well as demonstrating the ways in which children and teachers mediate meaning making in collaborative contexts. The findings suggest implications for the ways in which educators might support and draw on individual approaches to response to facilitate divergent meaning making and expansion of repertoires of response for students. In addition, the study suggests implications for the careful design and development of contexts in which children are granted interpretive authority and encouraged to engage in collaborative meaning-making.

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Introduction

It is common practice in classrooms today for teachers to offer a variety of whole group and small group contexts in which children read and discuss written materials (Johnston, 2012; Langer, 1986; Langer & Applebee, 1986; Raphael, 1992). Research has documented the ways in which whole group and small group contexts provide opportunities for children to discuss literature, thus expanding linguistic and literary repertoires (Almasi, 1995; Langer, 1986). However, as a research community, we know too little about how children's talk varies within and across reading contexts within one classroom space. The purpose of the current research is to describe individual student experiences as they engage in multiple reading contexts in a single classroom. Further, this study provides insight into the ways in which varied opportunities to participate in multiple contexts in one classroom support children's talk, meaning making and response around literature.

Research Questions

Marshall and Rossman (2009) suggest that research questions often emerge as observations of lived experiences are viewed through theoretical lenses. Further, research often grows from curiosity about everyday problems and eagerness to understand how they might be addressed (Merriam, 2009). Indeed, my dissertation is designed as a way to inquire about an observation nested within my own systematic attempt to better understand children's attempts at meaning making within and across literacy contexts in a

classroom. Specifically, I use qualitative methods to investigate the following question and sub questions:

- 1) How does literature discussion vary across two contexts within one classroom?
- 2) In what ways do contextual features of literature discussions (group size and leadership, teaching moves, and text) support meaning-making?

Overview of Guiding Research

Many researchers argue that talking about texts provides opportunities for children to develop comprehension strategies (Morrow & Smith, 1990) and affords children the opportunity to engage in rich conversations that can help them extend and refine previously held ideas (e.g. Johnson, 2012). In addition talking about literature helps children learn how to engage critically with peers in ways that facilitate cooperative reasoning (Almasi, 1995), and opens spaces for children to take on different identities as they engage with each other and with texts (Moje & Luke, 2009). As multiple and varied interpretations are shared, the text becomes not only a tool for self-understanding, but also a means of understanding others (Greene, 1995).

Since the 1970s, research on reading has suggested that comprehension is an active-constructive process. Additionally, researchers have emphasized that the interaction among readers, text, and the context influences responses and response patterns in readers (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Morrow & Gambrell, 2000). Therefore, the ways in which children take up themes in literature and feel connected to them seems

to reflect sociocultural activity that is continually shaped by the environment in which it occurs (Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Rogoff, 1990; Short, 1992; Morrow & Smith, 1990).

Consider the following discussion that occurred as I examined the text talk of 4th graders in a multilingual classroom, generated from a previous study (Peterson, 2012). In what follows the class was discussing *We Had a Picnic This Sunday Past* (Woodson, 1997) and *My Name is Jorge on Both Sides of the River* (Medina, 1998), two texts that had been read aloud to them. During this discussion, children made intertextual links, specifically focusing on the notion that characters from each text were addressed by other than their given names. The book discussion became heated as the participants argued that in some cases nicknaming had the potential to be derogatory. The following excerpt demonstrates the ways in which children shared their experiences as justification for their perspectives, and gained insight into other's perspectives.

Maria No, 'cause if he's born in Mexico, his name on his birth certificate is Jorge, he comes to... What's this called? Texas. United States. They should still call him Jorge, because it's on his birth certificate.

Mae: But they didn't know.

Ava: Yes, but the teachers they don't know. They don't know. They see that it says George, but they don't know the other side.

Mae: It's not Spanish, it's English now.

Maria: Yeah, but when you come to Texas, it's not Spanish; it's English now, but it's still Jorge.

Ernesto: I think he doesn't know that you are supposed to say George in the US.

Teacher: Who doesn't? Jorge doesn't?

Ernesto: (nods)

Joseph: So maybe he doesn't know that his English name is George, and his Spanish name is Jorge.

Three distinct viewpoints are present in this excerpt. First, Maria argued that Jorge's name should not be changed because names are part of one's identity, something one has from the time he or she is born. The second perspective, argued by Mae, Ernesto, Ava, and Joseph suggests that the teacher cannot be held accountable for the mispronunciation because she was unaware of the pronunciation of Jorge's name. The third argument is raised by Mae alone, and suggests that names are subject to the language of the popular culture. Therefore, it was not the teacher who was wrong, but Jorge.

The discussion that arose in this conversation led children to draw on multiple meaning-making tools such as their lived experiences, the words describing character emotions, and the book's images. Had the children not had the opportunity to engage in such a conversation, it is possible, if not probable, that certain conceptions about themes related to the ignorance of a teacher or the injustice of being forced to change one's name in order to be part of a community would not have raised. Consequently, some children may have left the conversation without any awareness of alternate ways to interpret the

text. Over time, talk such as the example above becomes part of the internal process that facilitates shifting the ways children approach and talk about representations in texts (Rogoff, 1990). If school is to be a place where children learn to think about texts, it is essential for researchers and practitioners to understand the contexts in which talk about literature occurs.

Classroom Structures that Open To Talk

The majority of research on classroom talk about literature has been conducted within two structures—whole class discussions, and small group discussions—and has been used to describe and occasionally to contrast the benefits of each context individually (Allen & Moller, 2009). Although the grouping structures for discussion have been studied in isolation, many classrooms provide for groups of varied sizes in which children are afforded opportunities to explore literature (Johnston, 2012; Langer, 1986; Langer & Applebee, 1986; Raphael, 1992). Yet, few studies (e.g. Allen & Moller, 2010; Morrow, 1990) have investigated the nature of children’s conversations across literacy contexts within one classroom. To better understand the complexity of participation in varying sized groups in the same classroom, it is important to continue to investigate social dynamics and sociocultural influences that lead children to engage in discussions about literature.

In the following sections, I present an overview of research describing talk about literature within elementary classroom contexts. I have elected to focus on prevalent contexts for book sharing and conversation, including read alouds and small group discussions of literature. I conclude by arguing the need to study discussions in varied

spaces within classrooms as a way of better understanding sociocultural influences on individual approaches to reading response.

Whole group discussions. Historically, teachers have read aloud to students as a way to introduce and increase the joy of reading (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004). However, justifications for read alouds have expanded to include instructional purposes. For instance, during a typical read aloud, a teacher stops to thoughtfully inquire about children's thinking or to model particular reading strategies (McGee & Schickendanz, 2007). Thus, current practices seem to indicate that read alouds are interactive and constructive spaces in which the teacher selects an age appropriate text to read aloud to the entire group of students (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004)

The benefits of offering children space and time to discuss texts in whole group contexts appear to be twofold: first, as the teacher reads the texts, children are exposed to new ways of talking that can contribute to a repertoire of reading strategies and response, thus facilitating the acquisition of literate processes such as decoding, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, text structures, and recognition of fresh and imaginative uses of language (Cambourne, 1988; Harste, 1984; Snow, 1993); second, talking about literature helps children develop a sense of narrative features, allowing them to reflect on interpretations (Teale & Martinez, 1996).

Small group discussions. Researchers have also argued the importance of allowing children to discuss literature in groups of five or fewer (Almasi, 1995; Goatley, Brock, & Raphael, 1995; Maloch, 2002; O'Flahavan, 1989) so as to increase participation. Over the past thirty years, two categories of small groups have emerged;

those where the teacher is present, and those where the teacher is not present. Proponents of the teacher-led small group discussions argue the importance of the teacher in assisting children in meaning-making and developing strategies associated with skilled reading (Tyner, 2007). Often, this structure is associated with guided reading wherein the teacher designs strategy lessons to be taught in small group settings.

Other small group configurations are less strategy focused, instead placing emphasis on discussing texts in more connected and responsive ways. Such organizations are interchangeably referred to as book clubs, literature circles, and discussion groups. In these arrangements, students engage in talk based on personal responses to literature. The teacher's presence is not necessary, however it is common for a teacher to interact with students in these settings. When teachers engage with students in small group settings, they may take on the role of a facilitator, regulating turn taking and the acquisition of particular reading skills and helping students overcome negative social positioning (Maloch, 2005; O'Flahaven, 1989).

Proponents of peer-led small groups argue that children reach new and important understandings when they are free to negotiate meaning in unbounded ways, which is only possible without the teacher's interference or dominance in conversations (Almasi, 1995). Both approaches to implementing small group discussions, therefore, have claims for benefits (Maloch, 2002; O'Flahavan, 1989; Pressley, Beard El-Dinary, Gaskins, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, & Brown, 1992).

Studies have shown that peer-led small group discussions help children develop academically and socially by giving them opportunities to dialogically engage with one

another and literature (e.g., Almasi, 1995; Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Arya, 2001). Additionally, researchers have documented how peer-led, small discussion groups encourage problem solving and provide opportunities to respond in culturally resonant ways (Almasi, 1995, Martinez- Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 2001). These findings suggest that when talking to peers, students are likely to broach topics that are meaningful to them, because they are not pressured to perform for a teacher or to reach particular conclusions (Almasi & Gambrell, 1997). Furthermore, researchers suggest that students talk more in settings in which the teacher is not present (Almasi, 1995; Martinez-Roldan & Robertson-Lopez, 2001).

In both contexts (varying in size and leadership) described above, discussions of responses to reading are a vital part in making meaning from text. In the next section, I explore sociocultural theories and transactional theories of reading response, demonstrating the connection between the two. Thus, I highlight the ways in which responses to literature are influenced by both social and cultural factors.

Overview of Theoretical Frame

To develop an in-depth understanding of the work children do as they discuss literature in classrooms that offer them varied structures, places, and times to talk about books, I draw on both sociocultural theories of learning (Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978) and transactional theories of reading response (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1995). Both Bakhtin and Vygotsky have been credited with developing the notion that human activities take place within a certain context, are mediated by cultural tools, including language, and are best understood when viewed historically (John-Stiener & Mahn, 1996). As a general

theory of learning, sociocultural theory suggests that processes are constructed through multiple, interrelated social interactions in which individuals use tools in order to construct meaning with others (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Thus, individual processes, including higher mental functions, have their roots in social processes, and all human action (internal and social) is mediated by tool use (John-Stiener & Mahn, 1996).

Transactional theories of reading response suggest that reading is an interpretive act in which the reader attends equally to individual psychological predispositions and purpose (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1995). Furthermore, proponents of this theory view texts as communication between the author and the world, arguing that reading has the potential to be transformative (Sipe, 2008). For instance, Rosenblatt (1938; 1995) emphasizes the importance of the reader, arguing that the text acts as a blueprint for interpreting what is brought up in the reader's mind. When readers come together to discuss their understandings of literature, they reveal the ways in which they are influenced by particular social and cultural factors. Thus, variation in response contexts implicates variation in approaches to discussion.

Taken together sociocultural theory and transactional theories of reading response suggest that: 1) language is a tool, used to mediate understandings of people, texts, and the world; and 2) meaning-making is dependent on the social and cultural context in which one is situated. The combination of these theories allows for in-depth examination of contextual and textual factors that influence or affect children's discussions of literature. Social learning theories help illuminate the ways discussing texts with others provide more opportunities for cognitive growth than reading texts alone. When

sociocultural theories and theories of reading response are combined, constructing meaning from text is not a static event, but one in a state of flux. Readers or listeners may change their interpretation as they receive new information about characters or gain insight into new perspectives. Langer (1992) suggests that all interpretations of texts are “momentary understandings,” subject to the influx of new information. As children are presented with opportunities to engage in discussions about texts, they become part of interpretive communities (Fish, 1980). Spaces to discuss literature enable children to approach text with dynamic views that will evolve through discussions with others.

In many classrooms, children are afforded multiple and varied opportunities to participate in discussions or “worlds of interaction” across a school day (Johnston, 2012, p. 2). Further, each learner is constructed and reconstructed across academic contexts, so each time a child enters a new context, he/she is cast into a new role with new expectations. However, only a small amount of empirical research has investigated what happens specifically when the same children are invited to participate in contexts of varying size and composition within one classroom community. Similarly, little is known about the ways in which contextual factors, (group size, leadership, varying participants, etc...) affect participation, discussion patterns, and responses to literature.

Overview of methods

Sociocultural theories are most viable when one observes spaces where learning occurs over an extended period of time. Hence, this study took place in a classroom. The focus of this study lends itself to qualitative, interpretive inquiry, particularly drawing on ethnographic and discourse analysis methods so as to highlight discourse patterns

representing approaches to reading response. Data were collected over five months across the fall and winter semester of the 2012-2013 academic year. Previous studies of literature discussion contexts have been limited in the amount of time spent observing contexts.

The multiage (3rd/ 4th grade) classroom that was the focus of this study was selected for multiple reasons: The teachers in this classroom, Ms. Sadowsky and Mrs. Mackendale (Pseudonyms), were identified as exemplary (Allington & Johnston, 2001) by a diverse group of educational stakeholders (i.e. the principal, the parents of former students, university faculty who focus on literacy education). Further, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky provided multiple contexts through which children are allowed to explore and discuss literature, and their pedagogical stances towards talk fit the theoretical assumptions guiding this investigation (i.e. talk is tool used to build meaning; meaning making is dependent on the context in which it occurs).

During the five months data were collected, I visited the classroom three times per week during the language arts block. These visits typically lasted between one and three hours, due to fluctuations in the daily schedule. Data collection included gathering and expanding detailed field notes, recording discussions (audio and video) of literature to capture as much classroom interaction as possible, selecting student artifacts, conducting focused student and teacher interviews, and collecting images of teacher and student created materials hung on the classroom walls.

Data analysis was interpretive and recursive, occurring throughout and following data collection. I identified general themes and treated them as developing hypotheses

until saturation occurred. Additionally, I ensured trustworthiness by engaging in member checking, periodic peer and advisor review, audit trail, negative case analysis, and prolonged engagement in the field (Marshall & Rossman, 2009).

Importance of the Study

The inquiry presented here is important because it provides a) deeper insights into teachers' invitations to participate in reading experiences; b) deeper insights into how children take up teacher invitations; c) empirical evidence supporting theories of engagement by comparing talk across small groups and whole groups across the same group of children; d) deeper understandings of how children bring their language, culture, and experience to the forefront during discussions, and; e) insights into the difference in the complexity of response across varying contexts.

This study is valuable because it furthers understandings about the work children do as they engage in conversations around texts by focusing on individual children as they participate in whole group and small group discussions of literature. Previous studies have placed emphasis on either whole group or small group contexts (e.g. Almasi, 1995; Sipe, 2008), or have studied talk in settings other than those that naturally occur in the classroom. The naturalistic design of this case study allowed me to examine individual student experiences within and across the contexts provided in the classroom and, thus, to contribute to understanding of classrooms in action.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter two provides a literature review exploring read aloud and small group contexts as they have been studied in classroom settings so as to situate this study in

existing literature. Chapter Three presents the study's methodology, data sources, and data analysis techniques. In Chapter Four, I present findings related to the general patterns of response across the literacy settings.

In Chapter five, I present four case studies of individual children and their experiences across read aloud and small group settings within Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's classroom. I describe the response types as the children navigated different social situations and texts. I show how they draw on particular techniques to present certain selves to others.

In Chapter Six, I argue that individual respondents have a propensity for a particular type of response that is generated from a range of sociocultural factors (Sipe, 2000). I argue that through talk, children position themselves as particular types of respondents, which results in them occupying certain positions within and across reading contexts. I also provide implications for research and practice.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

In this study, I explored the relationship between reader response and discussion strategies across two literacy contexts within one classroom. I was particularly interested in individual students' responses within read aloud and small group contexts. In this chapter, I examine theory and research that informed my understandings of these contexts, including a) the nature of children's talk in elementary school classrooms, b) the affordances of read-aloud contexts and small group discussions of literature.

This review of literature focuses on elementary-aged children in school contexts across various areas of the curriculum. Since discussion was the focus of this inquiry, I first argue for the centrality of talk as a way to make meaning within and across contexts in classrooms. Next I explore research regarding children's responses to literature across various reading contexts, including large and small groups (e.g., O'Flahavan, Almasi, & Ayers, 2008; Maloch, 2005; Sipe, 2000, 2002, 2008), focusing specifically on each how context supports opportunities to build meaning in the presence of text and peers. I conclude the review with the speculation that providing multiple classroom contexts for literature discussion (e.g., large and small groups) affords a range of opportunities for children's meaning making.

Theoretical Frame: Meaning as Social Construction

Classrooms are complex social systems that provide many opportunities for children to use language to do the work of meaning making (Cazden, 2001). Theorists have posed explanations of how dialogic models of talk encourage, deepen, and aid in the

development of learning processes. Sociocultural theorists also consider language to be a powerful cultural tool because it shapes consciousness and provides the means through which individuals interpret and learn to participate in their environments (Gee, 2000; Goffman, 2001; Gumperz, 1976; Johnston, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Further, this perspective suggests that learning depends upon a relationship among cognitive processes and cultural, historical, and contextual factors in which the learner is situated. When participating in particular contexts, individuals become subject to powerful discourses that position them to take on particular roles within groups or environments (Gee, 1999). Roles are assigned both locally, by those individuals who possess the tacit cultural knowledge associated with participation, and globally (Erickson, 1992) by institutions that label children as being, for example, “at risk,” “struggling,” and “gifted and talented.” Thus, documenting talk is not just about describing what’s being said, but how the words being used position listeners to take on particular identity roles within the context of the conversation (Gumperz, 2000). In classrooms, different opportunities are presented to children, both personal and academic, according to the roles in which they are cast. It is important to consider how intrapersonal dynamics shape participation structures and conceptions of the self within communities in social learning spaces such as classrooms when considering the ways in which students construct meaning.

Building on the notion that language is a tool that is used for meaning making, Erickson (1995) described the nature of talk as a strategic action taken by an individual to do work within a certain context. He argued that individuals are social actors who

participate in local contexts to become part of a working community. He further suggests some knowledge of social situations is explicit and some is implicit or tacit. Knowledge of implicit rules of engagement gives cultural insiders the advantage of having cultural competence or currency within a given social situation, thus affording them more powerful positions within the community. Several researchers have applied the notion that cultural competence is a factor in meaning making to literacy contexts, concluding that children's talk acts as a window into their narrative understanding (Bruner, 1990), linguistic competence (Erickson, 1995), and cognitive reasoning (Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich & Anderson, 1994). These studies document the ways in which children are positioned by classroom talk (Erickson, 1995) and how classroom talk acts as a springboard for cognitive development, collaborative reasoning (Clark, Anderson, Kou, Kim, Archodidou, & Nguyen-Jahiel, 2003), and meaning-making.

The theorists cited above have demonstrated that the direction, dynamics, and roles assigned within contexts in which talk is used as a meaning-making tool are essential to think about when describing the nature of various spaces within classrooms. Specifically, investigating the ways talk is used provides information about the predispositions of speakers, the positional identities to which they ascribe, the nature of cognitive development or conceptual change occurring between speakers, and the social dynamics that facilitate or inhibit meaning-making (Halliday, 1974; Johnston, 2012).

Research has demonstrated that literature often acts as a catalyst for collaborative meaning-making discussions (Johnson, 2012; Sipe, 2008). Thus, studying interactive reading contexts, seems a promising way to come to more complete understandings about

how language mediates comprehension of texts and social positions within classrooms. However, theories describing the power of talk as a mediating tool do not fully encompass the cognitive, emotional, or psychohistorical implications associated with reading and interpreting texts. Thus, to come to a more complete understanding of the ways in which readers position themselves academically, socially, and cognitively, it is important for studies that investigate discussions of literature to include lenses focused on the use of talk as a meaning making tool as well as theories of reading response. Hence, in the next sections, I illustrate the foundational principles outlined in theories of reading response.

Transactional Theories of Reading Response

Rosenblatt (1935, 1995; 1938) argues that readers situate themselves along a continuum as they approach texts. These positions are based both on historical understandings of how particular texts should be read and the reader's individual goal and intention for reading. At one end of Rosenblatt's continuum lies the aesthetic stance, closely associated with image, idea, and imagination. Further, when a reader takes an aesthetic orientation towards texts "attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relation with that particular text," (p. 25). In addition, Rosenblatt suggests that aesthetic engagement with text allows readers the opportunity to develop deeper understanding of the human condition by offering windows into others' experiences or mirrors that may help the reader investigate his or her own experience. This orientation towards text opens the potential for the reader to construct an evolving theory of person, which has the potential to help the individual make sense of parallel

experiences in the social world (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). In describing aesthetic orientations towards texts, Sipe (2008) cites the aesthetic theorist Ernst Gombrich (1969) who wrote “To marvel is the beginning of knowledge, and when we cease to marvel, we may be in danger of ceasing to know” (p. 2).

Theories describing aesthetic orientations toward text argue that literature holds transformative potential for individual readers. However, some theorists argue that the exploration of social themes in texts without the presence of others allows initial interpretations and reactions to go unchallenged (Cai, 2008; Lewis, 2000). Without discussion readers’ preconceived notions about social dynamics explored in texts may cloud an individual’s ability to come to new understandings or to see alternative possibilities. Hence, this perspective argues that without opportunities to explore initial interpretations of texts with others, readers’ may only come to simple understandings of story elements. Even more problematic is the notion that reading text only through a personal lens may lead to reinstantiations of prejudiced, biased, and stereotypical ideologies (Rogers, 2004). Thus, these theorists argue that for texts to reach full transformational potential, initial reactions have to be discussed with others.

At the other end of the continuum lies the efferent stance, a position oriented toward taking information away from the text. Efferent reading is focused on what happens after the reading event rather than during the experience of reading. Rosenblatt also argues that when taking an efferent stance the reader is using “selective attention” (p. 43) in order to gain specific information from the text. In explaining Rosenblatt’s conception of the efferent stance, Sipe (2008) gives the example of a person reading the

back of a pill bottle upon realizing that someone has overdosed. He suggests the reader would not be focused on the experience of reading, but rather is reading in order to satisfy an urgent need.

Placing these two stances on a continuum suggests that no response or engagement with a text is purely one or the other. In classrooms, alignment with one stance is usually established by the context and provided by the teacher. However, both aesthetic and efferent stances have the potential to elicit emotional responses that are based on both historical understandings of how particular texts should be read and individual goals and intentions for reading. Further, research has demonstrated that children's purposes are influenced by a host of contextual factors, including perceived benefit of the task (Eccles & Wigfield, 1999), peer support (Pantaleo, 2007), and interest and engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Studies of Classroom Talk

Historically, studies of talk have focused on the form of language, the ways in which words are used (Austin, 1962; Grice, 1975; Searle, 1975), and the function of language--the ways words work within a context to facilitate meaning-making and social positioning (Cameron, 1995; Erickson, 1995; Gumperz, 2001; Goffman, 2001). These studies have attempted to describe how participants learn to communicate, taking into consideration the participants (teachers and students) the implicit and explicit rules of participation, and other sociocultural factors mediating interaction. Below, I describe these studies in more detail, focusing on the implication organizations of classroom talk have for students' meaning making.

Early studies of classroom talk found that teachers typically asked questions for which they had a predetermined answer. Students responded based on what they believed to be the correct answer and the teacher judged the performance of the students based on their answers. This structure of talk was called IRE (Initiate, Respond, Evaluate), and has been noted as limiting the potential for complex meaning-making (Cazden, 1986; Mehan, 1979). Describing patterns of teacher-led talk in classrooms helped researchers shape hypotheses and frame questions about the effects these practices had on learning. For instance, researchers questioned whether or not the IRE structure privileged a single, correct answer, leaving little room for alternative ideas or interpretations (Almasi 2002; Almasi & Garas -York, 2010). Studies report that IRE models construct students as passive recipients of knowledge, which can result in disengagement (Wells, 2001). Viewed more broadly, IRE patterns of talk in classrooms limit the potential for learning because students are not permitted to construct their own understandings, but rather spend time analyzing what the teacher considers to be a “good” answer (Erickson, 1995; Short, 1992).

More robust models of teacher-to-student interaction called on teachers to relinquish their role as purveyors of knowledge, and instead to support children in developing thinking and communication skills associated with cognitive development (Almasi & Garas- York, 2010). Approaching teaching this way required the teacher to take a backseat, allowing children to try out different linguistic techniques associated with collaborative reasoning and argumentation. Such approaches were shown to help students develop interpersonal skills that lead to collaboration (McMahon & Goatley,

1995; Panteleo, 2007; Rice, 2005). For instance, in a case study of two boys, Maloch (2005) concluded approaches to discussion do not always transfer directly from one context to the next. Instead, the children in her study needed support from the teacher in order to learn the rules of engagement within each context. Maloch's study provides insight into the ways in which social interactions affect participation in small group settings, and implies that teacher participation and scaffolding is a necessary function of engaged and focused small group discussions.

In Maloch's study, the teacher participated not as the leader (e.g., IRE) but rather as a facilitator who joined in when necessary mediating turn taking and modeling participation strategies. She argued that this orientation towards literature discussion allowed students to engage in more authentic conversations about literature while learning the customs for conventional conversations. Similarly, Erickson (1995) argued that teachers play an important role in helping students appropriate language formats for particular types of dialogue. He described how kindergarten children needed the support of the teacher in order to participate appropriately in a classroom discussion. He documented the ways the teacher subtly cued children as to accepted ways of participating in a whole group discussion by ignoring inappropriate attempts to gain the floor, directing questions at specific students, prompting students to answer differently when there was an incorrect answer given, and using intonation to communicate acceptable participation. Further, he found that teacher presence may be necessary at times in order to facilitate balance in discussion topics and to facilitate conversations so that one topic or student does not dominate.

Other researchers (e.g. Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) have concluded that teacher facilitation is only needed temporarily, because once students become comfortable engaging in conversations on their own, they are able to draw on one another's expertise instead of relying on the teacher to regulate talk (Almasi, 1995). Results from these studies suggested that scaffolding in one classroom context may lead to noticeable shifts in participation styles-- specifically by encouraging children to engage in dialogic conversations in which they have opportunities to try on different ways of engaging in talk, rather than requiring them to participate in lecture-based approaches where the teacher delivers information. Further, in these studies, children developed deeper conceptual understandings of content using dialogic talk that evoked more divergent and robust conversation.

The literature above describes how the language positions students in particular ways, calling them to participate differently according to the explicit and implicit rules of the context. In the review that follows, I describe research that has examined how talk can be used in classrooms to provide opportunities for children to develop cognitive flexibility, higher-level thinking, and deeper levels of comprehension (Sipe, 2001; Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich & Anderson, 1994). Further, I make claims that demonstrate unaddressed areas in the literature. The sections are organized according to group size to make clear how research has suggested that talk varies according to contextual features. Each section begins with an overview of the setting (whole group and small group), including identified benefits, and then highlights unexamined features of each context.

Literature Discussion Contexts that Facilitate Collaborative Meaning-Making

With the recognition that talk is an important mediating tool in helping promote both cognitive and social development, attention has turned to understanding how talk is used as a tool when readers encounter texts in classrooms. Researchers have identified several contexts in which discussions of literature occur, including read aloud contexts and small group contexts, including both teacher and peer led small groups. In the following sections I explore studies that were conducted on these two settings.

Read Aloud Contexts

In *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, (1985) suggested that read alouds were “the single most important factor in determining eventual success in reading,” (p, 23). This claim was based on the findings of three studies (Compsky, 1975; Durkin, 1966; McCormick, 1977) in which the researchers used IQ testing to demonstrate differences between students who were read to and those who were not. One study, conducted by Durkin (1966) sampled 9,568 preschool students, identifying 203 as having participated in read-aloud experiences. Students were given IQ tests over a six-year span, which allowed the researcher to conclude that reading aloud to children predicted later academic success. Since these studies were conducted, literacy researchers have shown that children’s opportunities to respond to literature in read-aloud contexts act as a scaffold to their narrative understanding (Bruner, 1990). In addition, reading aloud provides spaces in the classroom where teachers can help children develop, design, and deepen ways of knowing (Wiseman, 2011). Finally, research examining the outcomes of reading aloud has demonstrated that the practice has the potential to

facilitate the acquisition of reading processes (e.g. see Morrow, 2003), as well as to improve children's comprehension of text (Ivey, 2003; Sipe, 2000, 2004), motivation to read (Fisher, Flood, Lapp & Frey, 2004), development of reading comprehension strategies (Lapp & Flood, 2003; Morrow, 2003), and oral language competence (Sipe, 2008). In what follows, I describe studies that highlight the features and functions of read aloud contexts including teacher participation and student engagement and participation.

Teachers in read alouds. Sociocultural perspectives suggest that one influential component on the nature of a read-aloud is the structure of the social interactional patterns organized by the adult conducting the reading (Sipe, 2000). Thus, when discussing read-alouds, it is important to consider the role teachers play in facilitating talk. Historically, researchers have demonstrated that teachers believed successful read-alouds could be determined by the number of questions asked both during and at the culmination of the story and the amount of positive reinforcement children receive as they answer questions correctly (Flood, 1977). Thus, for a time, teachers typically structured read alouds in the IRE format described earlier in this chapter. However, shifting stances on learning allowed researchers and teachers to pose and test ways to engage readers more fully with texts being read aloud.

In one study focused on interactive reading, Roser and Martinez (1985) identified three distinct roles that adults play when they read to children. Specifically, they argued that adults acted as a) co-responders, sharing reactions and initiating discussions, b) informers and moderators, providing information and assessing understandings, and c) directors, announcing conclusions and introducing the story. Building on this work,

Martinez and Teale (1993) demonstrated the effects of teachers' approaches to read alouds on what children take away from texts by presenting a comparison of kindergarten teachers' storytime interactions. They reported that teachers consistently focused on different elements of texts (e.g. story elements) and asked different types of questions (e.g. textually explicit, inferential, associative). The variation in teacher guidance facilitated differences in the ways in which children developed strategic approaches to comprehending texts. More recently, Sipe (2008) indicated that the most authentic student responses were generated when teachers provided invitations for students to talk, encouraged students to elaborate, and probed them to consider how future and past events might affect the plot of the story. These studies provide insight into the ways in which contexts might be constructed as interactive spaces in which the meaning making is jointly constructed by both the children and adult participants. Barrentine (1996) described this approach to reading aloud as interactive, suggesting that students and teachers collaboratively engage analytic discussions about texts.

In an effort to identify effective read-aloud strategies, Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) surveyed principals in the hopes of finding teachers that might be identified as "experts" in the ways they conducted read alouds. To qualify as an expert, students had to demonstrate "significant reading achievement," the teacher had to be considered a model for other teachers to follow, or the teacher was generally recognized as an expert teacher. After identifying 45 expert teachers, the research team used surveys to identify the practices they drew on when reading aloud to students. To corroborate their findings, they selected 18 teachers to observe. From the combination of surveys, interviews, and

their own observation, this research team suggested that interactive read alouds were spaces in which teachers and students worked together to co-construct meanings of a text that met student interests, as well as their social and developmental needs. More specifically, they reported that interactive read-alouds motivated students and promoted comprehension when a) books were chosen based on students' interests, as well as their social, emotional, and developmental levels; b) the books were previewed by the teachers so they were familiar with the content; c) teachers established a clear purpose for reading; d) teachers animated the read aloud through the use of expression and vocal prosody; e) teachers helped focus students on particular aspects of the text by asking higher level questions; and f) teachers provided for children's connections with their independent reading and writing.

Others have suggested that when engaging in interactive read-alouds, the teacher should set expectations that students actively respond to stories (McGee & Schickendanz, 2007). Research has dubbed this approach to reading-aloud an interactive read aloud model, indicating that students and teachers collaboratively discuss literature in semi-structured ways. Interactive read-alouds are said to facilitate deeper, more complex understandings of texts (Barrentine, 1996; Heath, 1982; Morrow, 2003; Purcell- Gates, McIntyer, & Freppon, 1995; Sipe, 2008). Hence, many researchers have investigated how children engage in interactive read-aloud sessions (e.g. Sipe, 2000, 2002, 2008; Wiseman, 2011; Worthy, Chamberlain, Peterson, Sharp, & Shih, 2012) to show the various benefits of this context. Embedded within interactive read-aloud structures are instances in which teachers model higher level thinking skills, asking thoughtful

questions, and prompting discussions (Barrentine, 1996; McGee & Schickendanz, 2007). Research specifically suggests that in the most effective interactive read-alouds, in which children appear to make conceptual gains, the teacher designed meaning-centered discussions that were guided by teacher questions and modeling of thought processes (McGee & Schickendanz, 2007).

Many studies of read aloud contexts focus on the words spoken by children, because it is through talk that thoughts are externalized (Vygotsky, 1978). When participants share thinking aloud in read-aloud settings, they make internal processes available for interpretation (Shiffrin, 1994). Analysis of talk has shown how children use language to mediate understanding of what they read (Sipe, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). Further, studying talk in read-aloud contexts has provided insight into cultural rules of participation, identifying the nuanced participation (or lack of participation) by all members of the group (both teachers and students) in order to better understand the social positions participants occupy within this reading context (Erickson, 1995). In the remainder of this section, I review relevant studies that make use of talk as the unit of analysis. Specifically, I highlight the methodological and analytical approaches made by researchers describing the nature of children's responses to literature as it affords the opportunity to participate in interactive read-alouds. Studies in this section include whole group and small group read aloud settings.

Students in read aloud contexts. Sipe (2001; 2008) used analysis of children's participation during both whole group and small group read-alouds sessions to draw conclusions about the ways in which young children use talk to mediate their

understanding of text. He described five ways in which young children's (second grade and under) oral and physical responses to text, drawn from the cultural models they bring into the classroom, were used for meaning making. He concluded that when they are being read to, children: 1) analyze the text or trying to understand what is happening; 2) make intertextual links between multiple texts; 3) connect through personal responses; 4) enter into the text through imagination (transparent response); and 5) use performances to demonstrate understanding of the text. Drawing on Rosenblatt's notion of aesthetic response, Sipe demonstrated how children's talk (e.g., their expressed links with the text or their attempts to enter the story) revealed their ways of making meaning in analysis of complex themes. Studying talk allowed Sipe (2008) to make claims about the psychological processes that led to comprehension. Included in his implications are claims about cultural and historical factors that may have led to particular acts of comprehension. For example, in describing instances in which children resisted particular narrative storylines, Sipe (2008) suggested "readers from non-hegemonic cultures may resist texts from fear and anger at the injustices in the story and its connection to the real world," (p. 166). Such analysis pointed to the sociocultural nature of response, demonstrating the interconnectedness between cultural and historical experiences and the interpretation of texts. Sipe went on to suggest that it is possible that by surfacing these acts of meaning making in a large group, children were afforded the opportunity to experience different vantage points from which to interpret text, which extended their interpretive repertoires.

To argue for the benefits of allowing children to respond authentically to texts in whole group settings, Wiseman (2011) collected data on interactive read-alouds for nine months in an urban kindergarten, in which children were encouraged to respond freely to texts during classroom storytime. Through her analysis of student talk, she determined at least two important contributions of the read-aloud experience. First, she posited that the children's in-the-moment responses gave the teacher an opportunity to confirm diverse contributions, and thus affirm student backgrounds. Second, she argued that the structure of interactive read-alouds provided students the opportunity to elaborate on ideas, which created a dynamic where children collaborated to build meaning. Both of these discoveries seem dependent on careful listening as a feature of the most productive read-aloud discussions. She argued that careful attention and engagement in the read-aloud context resulted in students drawing on critical thinking skills to arrive at deep comprehension of the textual content. She cited one specific example of several students linked contribution with the word "because," which created a dynamic that either deepened or challenged the original statement. Further, the word because indicated deep investment in the discussion and instantiated conversational expectations that speakers support their ideas with evidence. This analysis allowed Wiseman to claim the importance in implementing whole group interactive read-alouds that encourage engaged conversations about texts.

Researchers have also investigated read-aloud contexts as potentially transformative spaces in which the deconstruction of texts may result in cognitive shifts, extending potential development from comprehension to that of understanding critical

social issues (Moje & Luke, 2009; Rogers & Mosley, 2006). In many instances, these studies draw on analysis of children's talk as a way of making claims about children's understandings of social and political themes present in children's literature (Mendoza & Reese, 2001; McCarthy & Moje, 2002; Moje & Luke, 2009). Further, these researchers also suggest that read-alouds might be a space in which children's awareness of critical social issues can be developed by deconstructing texts in order to identify oppressive themes (Rogers & Mosley, 2004). Hence, through open discussions, critical issues of social justice including racial oppression and gendered positioning might be examined, deconstructed, and reconstructed in ways that allowed students to develop a social imagination about how things could be (Gutierrez, 2008). Finally, studies of critical approaches of read-alouds have revealed the potential for whole group literature discussions to open spaces for untangling conflicts and examining issues of power and oppression, while promoting dialogue among students. This view of read-aloud extended previous understandings in that it encourages students to use their newfound understandings of social situations in order to make social change or take social action and supports children to think critically about the world around them, as they viewed situations from multiple perspectives.

Many researchers studying the transformative nature of read-alouds utilize children's utterances to make claims about how whole group read aloud contexts might allow children to explore complex critical social issues under the guidance of the teacher. These studies also suggest that read aloud contexts may offer children opportunities to explore real questions related to injustices they experienced personally. One such study

conducted by Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, and Johnson (2007) described ways in which read aloud contexts facilitated shifts in children's understandings about cultural and racial representations in texts. In this study, 33 students from "working poor" backgrounds were exposed to multiple versions of the Santa Claus story. The researchers wanted to understand children's interpretations of race as they encountered stories about Santa Claus portrayed as culturally and linguistically diverse. Copenhaver-Johnson, et al. (2007) analyzed children's talk for elements that highlighted particular world-views in regard to racial themes. Specifically, they found instances of children using racial terminology like "hillbilly," "black," "mixed," "white," in response to various portrayals of Santa. By reanalyzing the talk around critical phrases, Copenhaver-Johnson, et, al. were able to identify instances in which the children challenged one another's perspectives about the race of a character. Further, these researchers suggest that, through discussion, children's perspectives about racial themes may shift as a result of participating in critical read-aloud spaces. Further, they contend that read-aloud spaces can enable students to develop cognitive flexibility, leading to deeper conceptualizations and interpretations of text. However, data analysis in this study was limited to one set of texts in one context, thus limiting the implications to one setting. Further, there is no evidence to suggest that outside of the presence of a teacher, children continued to recognize or attend to perspectives other than those with which they had originally responded.

While read-alouds have been shown to be important in a variety of ways, some researchers argue that whole group discussions cause anxiety because many children do

not choose to speak in front of large groups (Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Arya, 2001; Morrow & Smith, 1990). These researchers argue that limited number of turns at talk inhibits students’ opportunity to respond to text and grow their thinking, resulting in unequal opportunities for the development of critical thinking skills across the classroom. Further, the gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1984) suggests that in order for students to internalize cognitive processes, they need opportunities to practice skills and techniques taught in whole groups, with less participation from the teacher.

A number of studies have indicated that children engage in different types of meaning making in small groups than they do in large groups (e.g. Gambrell & Almasi, 1997; Morrow, 1990). Further, researchers have suggested that in small groups children use language and nonverbal signals that are easily understood by other children more readily in small group settings because the focus and attention isn’t directed at the teacher in charge (Martinez- Roldan & Lopez- Robertson, 2000; Morrow & Smith). Researchers have also found that allowing children to discuss literature in small groups promotes more literary and literacy interactions than when children are in large groups (Morrow & Smith, 1990). In the next sections, I review research about small group discussions of literature, including literature on both teacher-led and peer-led group organizations.

Meaning Making in Small Groups

Small group discussion contexts, also called literature circles, might be defined as small groups of four to five students who come together to engage in egalitarian, student-centered discussions about texts (Daniels, 2002; Raphael & McMahon, 1997; Short, 1993). Research shows that, in addition to demonstrating that most sustained and

meaningful conversations are generated around topics that are important to students (Wells, 2001), students may come to deeper understandings of text elements and plot when they initiate and lead conversations (Cazden, 1988; 2001), a condition which has historically been absent in whole group discussions. Further, small group discussions are thought to be successful because they are based on collaborative relationships, in which participants work toward a common goal (Short, 1992). Hence, in recent years, literature circles have gained popularity as research has reported that students demonstrated cognitive gains and deeper comprehension as they engage in student-centered discussions of literature (Ain- Iasi, 1995; Blum, Lipsett, & Yocom, 2002).

The features of small group discussion include common commitments, a valuing of diversity, shared vulnerability, fluid roles, and decision-making through consensus (Short, 1992). Collaborative stances toward meaning-making in small groups creates the potential for children to consider multiple points of view, and thus expand their repertoires of interpretation. For instance, Short (1992) explored the nature of first grader's graders' small group discussions as they drew conclusions about a variant of the folk tale, "The Mitten." Initially, all but one child discussant agreed on the problem of the story. However, the students considered the alternative argument, exploring different possibilities (Short, 1986; 1992). Short contended that the purpose of this conversation was not to complete an assignment, but students were authentically engaged in problem solving, intent on engaging in inquiry, and in enhancing their understandings of the text. She argued that the small group context provided a space where all voices were heard, allowing children to actively think and construct meaning together. Although the children

in *The Mitten* discussion talked with, managed their disagreements, and even confirmed points of contentions by checking back into the text—showing evidence of being experienced discussants.

The collaborative nature of small groups has also been shown to create safe spaces where children can explore critical social issues (Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 2000). For instance, trying to combat the notion that children are too young to engage in critical dialogue, Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson studied first graders practicing critical literacy in small group settings. Martinez-Roldan and Lopez-Robertson found that small groups provided contexts in which learners could live through character experiences, explore social issues, and make deeply personal connections to the text.

The literature on small groups is divided into two sub-categories; those where the teacher is present, and those where the teacher is not present. Proponents of the teacher-led small groups argue the importance of the teacher in assisting children in meaning making. They contend that when left outside the presence of the teacher, children only reach surface level understandings of texts. However, proponents of the peer-led small groups argue that children reach new and important understandings when they are free to negotiate meaning in unbounded ways, which is only possible without the teacher present. Both approaches to implementing small group reading contexts, therefore, have benefits (Maloch, 2002; O’Flahavan, 1989; Pressley, Beard El-Dinary, Gaskins, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, & Brown, 1992). Thus, in the sections below I briefly discuss the advantages of decentralized (teacher not present) and centralized (teacher present small groups).

Meaning making in teacher-led (centralized), small groups. For over four decades, researchers have recognized that teacher-led small group contexts provide meaning-making and opportunities for students as they attempt to comprehend literature (Almasi, 1995; Markman, 1979; Morrow & Simth, 1990; Pantaleo, 2007). However, many of these studies argue that the most productive way for teachers to participate in small groups is for them to act as a facilitators, helping mediate the talk and direction of discussions, rather than as a purveyor of knowledge. In one such study, Pantaleo (2007) described the ways in which her contributions to meaning-making sessions with first graders allowed them to come to more complete comprehension of postmodern picture books. In Pantaleo's study, she read a text aloud to a small group of children, engaging them in conversations about the text along the way. Drawing on Mercer's (1995) notion of exploratory talk, she encouraged children to respond authentically (without prompting from the teacher) to the text. She described her role as that of a facilitator rather than as a traditional teacher, noting the ways in which she built on student responses rather than evaluating them. Hence, she played an integral role in lifting up critical contributions that led to deeper conversations. She discovered that in the presence of a teacher, small group literature discussions provided opportunities for children to try out and reflect on their responses to literature and gave them opportunities to come to well-developed conclusions about the meanings of postmodern texts. She claimed that teacher led small group contexts not only provided opportunities for students to develop literacy skills, including comprehension of text and collaborative reasoning, but also opened spaces in which children could learn how to interact with one another in ways that facilitate

learning. Further, Panteleo (2007) argued that students were more willing to discuss ideas in small groups with the teacher present, which provided opportunities for them to explore multiple interpretive possibilities and expanded their meaning making potential. This study provides evidence for the importance of teacher presence in facilitating collaborative meaning making about literature.

In a study similar of small group discussions of literature, Eeds and Wells (1989) found that the teachers supported students in small group talk by offering scaffolds necessary for conversation maintenance by providing encouragement for and modeling appropriate participation styles. They also noted that the teacher assumed responsibility for ensuring that comprehension didn't break down through the course of the discussion by clarifying textual meanings and guiding the conversation so that it maintained relevance to the text. Further, Eeds and Peterson (1989) found that the teacher was responsible for asking higher-level questions that facilitated deeper understanding of embedded textual themes.

Proponents of teacher-led small groups have argued that when children are outside the presence of a teacher, their talk turns to less productive, more surface level discussion of texts (Eeds & Peterson, 1995). In fact, Roller and Breed (1994) found that when young children were asked to discuss literature without guidance, the conversations tended to be positive and enthusiastic, but at times lacked substance, i.e., the talk focused on factual recall of plot features. For instance, based on their study of young children's responses to read alouds across three contexts, Morrow and Smith (1990) argued that the most beneficial read-aloud situations were those in which children were encouraged to

interact with adults around texts in small groups, because adults were able to clarify difficult vocabulary or pose questions that helped develop children's comprehension strategies. Results from the literature reviewed above are consistent with several sociocultural learning theories arguing that when children interact with one another around problem solving tasks, they are more likely to reach higher levels of understanding than when teachers solve the problem (Bahktin, 1981; Dewey, 1916; Vygotsky, 1978). However, many researchers have argued the benefits of allowing children to discuss literature without the teacher present. These studies are the focus of the following section.

Meaning making in peer-led small groups. Research has also indicated that when the teacher is present in small groups, students are limited in the topics they elect to discuss (Almasi, 1995; Almasi, O'Flahavan, and Ayar, 2001; Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 2001). Proponents of peer-led small groups argue that such orientations are problematic because students discuss literature in ways that the teacher wants to hear, rather than engaging in authentic conversations about texts (Almasi, 1995). Thus, many researchers have cited the benefits of allowing students to discuss literature outside of the presence of the teacher.

Small groups in which students have the power to develop, maintain, or change the topics have been described as decentralized. Decentralized small groups are considered to be more consistent with children's interests, increasing engagement and motivation to participate in discussions (Almasi, O'Flahavan, and Ayar, 2001). Further, Almasi, et al. (2001) argued that decentralized discussions provide opportunities for

students to participate differently, giving new access to different discourse styles and patterns. Specifically, they argue that participation in small groups affords children the opportunity to try on different identity roles, thus expanding their repertoire for social engagement around literature while at the same time providing opportunities to construct meaning around text with peers. That is, when children have opportunities to actively engage with one another around text, they are likely to simultaneously develop comprehension strategies and social skills associated with discussion techniques.

Research on peer-led small groups has also indicated that when children have opportunities to work in small groups without the presence of the teacher, they were better able to problem-solve when cognitive conflict arose (Almasi, 1995; Wells, 1985). Without the presence of the teacher to mediate arguments or to interpret responses, children are forced to dialogically engage with one another and with literature (Almasi, 1995; Almasi, O'Flahavan, & Ayar, 2001). Further, this research has indicated that students are more willing to take academic risks in terms of asking questions and providing supported thinking when the teacher is not present (Almasi, 1995). Martinez-Roldan and Lopez-Robertson (2000) study highlighted the ways in which discussing literature outside of the presence of the teacher promoted risk taking and language play that facilitated deeper understandings of texts. Specifically, they found students were more willing to draw on linguistic resources and cultural familiarity with peers than they were with the teacher. They went on to suggest that when children have opportunities to discuss texts in small groups, they feel less pressure to conform to what the teacher wants and are more willing to share deeply personal connections. The researchers suggest that

this may be a result of cultural expectations among group members, especially with those who possess different linguistic resources. Thus, peer- led small groups have been said to help students develop both academically and socially (Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Arya, 2001).

Almasi (1995) conducted a comparison study between teacher-led small groups and peer-led small groups. During the peer led group contexts, children were encouraged to interact around literature, showing support for one another. Almasi described the peer led group model as decentralized because the teacher was not present and the conversations and topics of discussions were guided by the children’s interests. In teacher-led settings, the teachers helped students develop basic comprehension strategies, like such as locating information in text, responding to and interpreting ideas, and sharing responses with peers.

Almasi argued that the most prolific conversations occurred when students were presented with information that did not match their previous understandings. She named this phenomenon cognitive conflict, and suggested episodes of cognitive conflict marked the point at which cognitive development occurred. Almasi (1995) found that within both contexts, students experienced cognitive conflict within themselves, with others, or with the text. However, she demonstrated that in her study, the richest conversation around points of cognitive-conflict arose when the teacher was not present. Specifically, in teacher-guided groups, the conflicts were marked by students’ incorrect responses to teacher questions, whereas in peer-guided small groups, children arrived at the conflict by engaging in acts of reflection. Almasi went on to suggest that teacher-led discussions

most often resulted in simple understandings of texts theorizing that because children had the freedom to make personal connections and to play with ideas in peer-led groups, they were more likely to understand and interpret thematic undertones in texts. Table 2.1 provides an example of Alamsi’s data set that illustrates the differences between centralized and decentralized small groups.

Table 2.1

Peer Led Small Group (Decentralized Group)	Teacher Led Small Group (Centralized Group)
<p>S 91: “I wonder why they said ‘who needs hotdogs, “ he replied ‘blueberries are free””</p> <p>S 87: You see, he’d have to buy hot dogs, and, and... and you didn’t have to buy the blueberries. You just found ‘em and then you wouldn’t have to buy a hotdog and then you wouldn’t waste your money, and then you could like, keep like... different things that he found when he was there, so he didn’t have to spend money eating.</p> <p>S 44: But he’d have... he’ll have to buy the blueberries too.</p> <p>S 91: Uh uh, (shaking head side to side)... but he found them for free.</p>	<p>T2: Who was pretending to do the work? S28: Bill T2: It wasn’t Bill. It was... (nod to S 12) S 12: Wilford T2: Wilford.</p>

From Almasi (1995), p. 325

In this example, the centralized teacher-led approach did not present children with authentic problems. Instead, the conversation focused on the goals of the teacher and surface level comprehension. Almasi claimed that in the peer-led, decentralized discussion, children were more likely to ask questions. She went on to suggest that teacher-centered models focus on getting the right answers to questions rather than thinking critically, and thus she argued that decentralized small groups were desirable.

Almasi's work helped to conceptualize the nature of peer-guided, small group talk in classrooms in ways that highlighted the complexity of exchanges between students when discussing texts.

It is important to note that not all decentralized models of reading occur outside of the presence of the teacher. For instance, in the study conducted by Maloch (2002), described above, the teacher was present, but she participated as a facilitator rather than providing topics of discussion or leading the conversation. Thus, she acted more as a support in developing participation strategies than she did as a provider of strategies or answers.

Many researchers have argued that without the presence of a teacher to facilitate group discussion, talking about literature in small groups can be a space where social positioning and turn-taking causes limited engagement and thus limits levels of cognitive development (Lewis, 1997; O'Flahavan, 1989; Pressley, Beard El-Dinary, Gaskins, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, & Brown, 1992). For example, in her study of small group interaction, Lewis (1997) noted that when left to discuss literature in small groups without the teacher, fifth and sixth grade students worked to gain and maintain power over one another. The struggle for power affected how well conversations and interpretations functioned for the group, thus limiting the democratic possibilities available and silencing some voices. Lewis argued that the absence of the teacher created a dynamic in which some children stepped in to assume a leadership role, and one in which the self-appointed leaders determined the topics of discussion rather than leaving the decision making to the group. Some researchers have argued that the potential for one

member of a group to dominate conversations to fit his or her own personal agenda defeats the purpose of designing spaces in which children can engage in conversations.

Other researchers have claimed that in the absence of the teacher, decentralized small groups can result in children coming to more surface level understandings of texts, arguing that the presence of the teacher is essential in helping children to develop meaning-making skills associated with cognitive development (Peterson & Eeds, 1990). Further, when teachers are not present as children read and discuss texts, there is a potentially heightened possibility that comprehension will break down (Evans, 1997). Thus, many teachers elect to implement roles or jobs that guide student talk when the teacher is not present.

As demonstrated above researchers have long been interested in studying reading contexts in which talk is used as a meaning making tool. Studies of read-alouds have demonstrated the ways in which whole group settings allow students to collaboratively deconstruct texts in ways that help them come to more complete comprehension (Wiseman, 2011). However, the whole group context has been criticized for silencing the voices of students who elect not to participate (Short, 1992). Thus, many researchers have noted that small groups offer all students opportunities to talk. Teacher led small groups are argued to allow students to discuss literature with the teacher facilitated conversational turns and interpreting ideas (Peterson & Eeds, 1989; Short, 1992). However, many researchers have indicated that teacher-led peer groups limit the risk taking students take, thus impeding the potential cognitive gains (Almasi, 1995; Almasi, O'Flahavan, & Ayar, 2001). Peer-led small groups have been identified as spaces where

children engage in authentic discussions of literature, however some researchers have suggested that without the presence of the teacher, social positioning that silences some voices may occur. Further, researchers have argued that students may only come to surface understandings of texts without the careful guidance of a teacher.

All of these studies provide important information about the ways in which meaning is made within particular literacy contexts. However, none of them have focused on how talk shifts and grows across contexts in the same classroom. Further, the studies reviewed above have not attended to individual students approaches to response, nor do they identify the ways in which response to literature position students within a context. Finally, the studies above do not attend to the ways in which individual participants affect the tone and direction of conversations. Below I review the few studies that do attend to the same children across contexts, highlighting specific findings related to meaning making and social positioning.

Influences of group size on story talk. Morrow and Smith (1990) attempted to determine the influence of group size on students' responses to literature. The sample included 27 kindergarten and first grade classrooms in a predominantly middle class school district. The researchers began with the hypothesis that children in small groups would have more opportunities to speak, thus allowing them to develop deeper levels of understanding and comprehension around plot themes. The design of the study was such that the researchers read three stories to the whole group, then three different were read to small groups, and three more stories were read to children in a one-on-one context. To assess comprehension, the research team asked children a series of comprehension

questions based on categories of story grammar (Mandler & Johnson, 1977). Specifically, they asked children to recall elements of the narrative and state cause-effect relationships. Morrow and Smith also analyzed children's verbal behaviors to determine if they were focusing on the print, the meaning of the story, the story structure, or the illustrations. These measures allowed them to quantify the response types per setting, thus allowing for claims about the level of comprehension across settings.

Morrow and Smith (1990) found that children's recall of story elements increased when group sizes were raised from one to three, but decreased when group size went from three to the whole class. Based on these results, they argued the benefits of discussing literature in small groups with an adult present. They went on to suggest that when the teacher follows the children's lead, small group book conversations yield deeper conceptual development because learners have more opportunities to ask personally relevant questions about the text. They concluded that contextual factors affect the degree to which children can benefit from conversations around texts. Specifically, they stated that the opportunity to engage in small groups allowed children to explain ideas to one another so that they may arrive at joint understandings, whereas in whole-group reading situations, children must wait for teacher-facilitated interpretations. This research provided insight into how different group sizes can contribute to different levels of understanding, some constraints of this study included the fact that the children were read to by research assistants rather than their teacher. Also, there is no evidence that children had been familiarized with any of the contexts in which they were being read to. Thus the children may have been more accustomed to one discussion type over others,

making them more likely to participate in particular ways. These confounding factors may have affected the results of the study. A more long-term look at the same children across different reading contexts might help to theorize more fully about the affordances of each context individually or how they work together. My study of discussions across contexts with children's own teachers was designed to extend aspects of Morrow and Smith's study over a longer period, and with naturally-occurring conversations as the demonstrations of meaning construction.

Since Morrow and Smith's study, researchers have argued that contextual factors within small groups (e.g. the presence or absence of the teacher) have an effect on how children make meaning (Short, 1992). Results from this research have identified two distinct approaches to small groups in classrooms: decentralized (peer-led) models or centralized (teacher-led) models (Almasi, 1995; Almasi & Y 2010).

Raphael & McMahon (1992) attempted to design and study a program which children were provided opportunities to engage in both centralized and decentralized group structures. In their four-part model, students were given the opportunity to read, discuss text with peers, respond to text in writing, and participate in community sharing. The teacher was present during all whole group sessions, but acted as a facilitator rather than a purveyor of knowledge. Like Panteleo (2007), Raphael, et. al. argued that the teacher's presence was necessary in order to facilitate strategy instruction and to extend children's ideas about texts. However, they insisted that in order for students should be afforded opportunities to "play" with responses, trying out ideas in the safety of a small group of peers before bringing their reactions to the whole group. The opportunity to

discuss ideas in small groups afforded students the space to completely formulate their ideas, so that they were comfortable presenting them in front of the large group. Further, they argued, that the ability for children to try out different types of responses allowed them to experience which approaches were successful, thus facilitating a knowledge of appropriate and relevant participation styles. Finally, through analysis, they discovered that when children were allowed to listen to others and share their thinking and ideas in small groups, they were exposed to different ways of understanding, thus expanding their notions of possible interpretations of the text.

Raphael, et al. (1992) also reported that as children brought topics and ideas into a whole group setting, the teacher was able to scaffold understandings of multiple layers of textual meaning by providing structures (e.g. role playing, further discussion, higher level questioning) that facilitated deeper understandings of the ideas that were important to the students. What was unique about the instructional design of this intervention study was that children read and discussed the same text across all contexts, leaving questions about the ways in which children approach the discussion of various types of texts across contexts. While it was possible to make conclusions about the nature of talk across the contexts studied, there was no evidence of what happens when different texts were introduced into any or all contexts. Further, there was little evidence that the instructional design was familiar to any of the participants; thus the study was based on an intervention, rather than as a naturally occurring phenomenon.

While both of these studies indicate that participation in different contexts yields different outcomes, such as increased comprehension or development of confidence,

neither addresses what happens when the same children are provided multiple opportunities to discuss literature across varying contexts. Further, some studies, like the Morrow and Smith (1990) and Raphael and McMahon (1992), have attempted to explain the differences in discussion patterns across different reading contexts, arguing for one context over others.

Summary and Direction

Researchers (e.g. Allen & Moller, 2009) argue that a variety of grouping structures should be offered to children so that a range of meaning-making negotiations can be acquired, thus promoting cognitive flexibility, development of social skills, and development of a concept of a dynamic self (Johnson, 2012). Even so, very few studies have studied the ways in which the same children participate within and across these contexts. Studying multiple reading contexts might make it possible to identify differences in the patterns of discussions as they vary according to readers, contexts, and the texts. My study's design was an attempt to add to the understandings of what happens when children are afforded multiple and varied opportunities to respond to literature. Further, I hoped to better understand how various contexts (e.g. number of participants, texts, and the composition of groups) affect discussions within and across settings.

Studies of read-aloud contexts have argued that opportunities for students to hear approaches to response (both teacher and students) facilitates children's acquisition of particular comprehension strategies (Barrentine, 1996; McGee & Schickendanz, 2007). Further, studies of read-alouds have found that children benefit from being afforded opportunities to collaboratively build understandings under the careful guidance of a

teacher (Sipe, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). Finally, researchers have demonstrated that discussions of literature in read aloud contexts have the potential to help children develop complex understandings of critical social issues (Moje & Luke, 2009; Rogers & Mosley, 2006). However, many have argued that speaking in the whole group may be intimidating for some children, thus large group contexts may silence some voices or lead to disengagement (Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Ayar, 2001; Short, 1992)

Studies of small groups have suggested that small group contexts allow for more authentic conversations about literature (Almasi, 1995; Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Ayar, 2001). These studies have indicated that small group settings are less threatening, and thus more children are willing to share ideas and express vulnerability (Short, 1992). Researchers have argued about the best organization for small groups, citing benefits of both centralized (teacher-led) and decentralized (peer-led) small groups. Proponents of decentralized small groups have suggested that children are more willing to engage in argumentation and collaborative discussions when they do not feel pressured to answer in ways that might please the teacher (Almasi, 1995; Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Ayar, 1995; Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 2001). However, supporters of centralized small groups argue that without the presence of the teacher, small group contexts might become a place where social positioning occurs, thus limiting the amount of democratic discussion that occurs (Evans, 1997; Lewis, 1997; 2001). Further, decentralized small groups have been criticized for resulting in students arriving at surface level understandings of texts, rather than attending to central themes and features of the literature they discuss.

Based on the extant literature, it seems promising to explore literature discussions in both small contexts and whole group contexts, because each context provides unique opportunities for meaning-making. It is possible that providing both contexts (read-aloud and peer-led small groups) within one classroom affords a unique environment for multiple meaning making strategies to be practiced, thus expanding children's repertoires for approaching and understanding literature. Understanding both transfer and shifting participation can offer insight into the ways in which sociocultural factors and classroom context mix to influence discussions across contextual spaces. It is important to continue to investigate reading contexts within one classroom setting so as to further inform theories of classroom talk and reading response. Such research will also help draw practical implications about the connection between spaces as well as help theorize about the potential of providing multiple opportunities to discuss literature.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The study examined the nature of four individual students' responses to texts, gathered from two independent reading contexts within one classroom. My analysis considered individual histories (Iser, 1976; Rosenblatt, 1938; 1995) and group composition as facets of the children's meaning making across contexts. The study also explored how students used language to position themselves and to position others (Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, Cain, 1998) as respondents to literature.

As indicated in chapter one, my understanding of response is dually situated in sociocultural (Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978) and transactional theories of reading response (Rosenblatt, 1935; 1995). The combination of these theories has allowed me to view student responses as collaborative actions that are constructed through discussions and interactions with texts. Further, these theoretical perspectives have made it possible to interpret responses to written words as rooted in individual histories. Rosenblatt (1935; 1995) asserted, "The text is the stimulus that focuses the reader's attention so that elements of past experience – concepts linked with verbal symbols are activated," (p 11).

In this chapter, I describe the methodologies I used to address my research questions. In the first section, I describe how an embedded case study design is appropriate for understanding the complex ways students craft responses to text. In the second section, I describe the classroom context that includes two reading contexts (teacher read-alouds and small group book clubs) investigated. In the third section, I review the data collection methods.

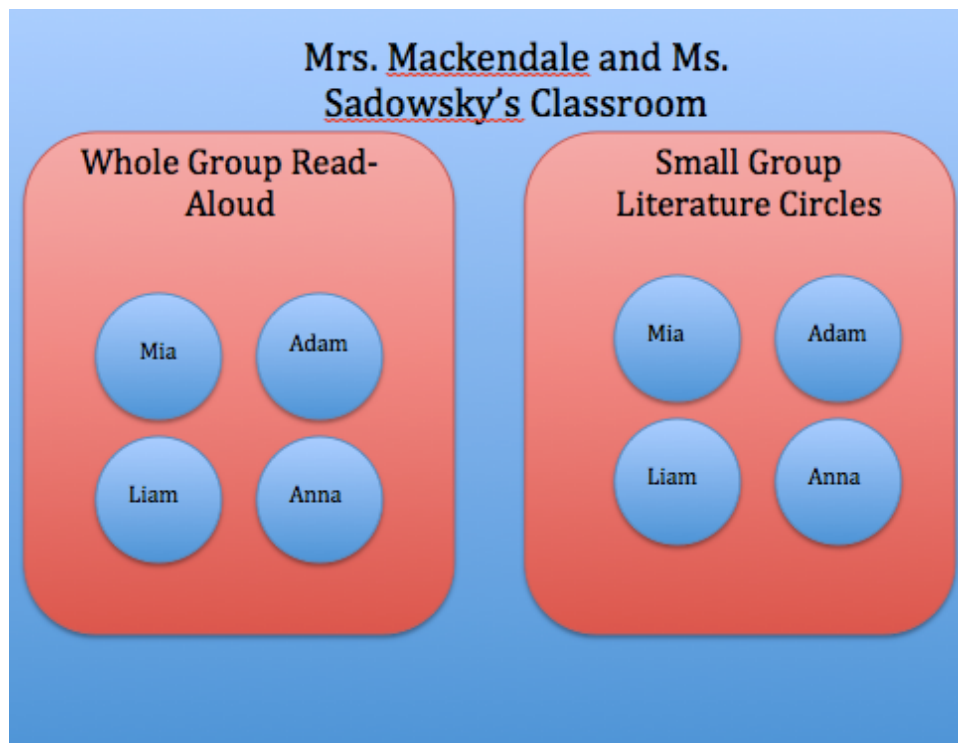
Case Study

Historically, researchers have defined case study as the investigation of identified social units in which interesting phenomena may occur (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Stake (1995) explained “a case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p.1). Of interest in any case are the spaces, individuals, or groups being studied. In this study, the important circumstances were both the collaborative construction of meanings produced in two separate settings and the contributions of individual respondents who made up those collaborations. Hence, the boundaries of this case were nested within multiple social units, specifically individual students were nested in the contexts within one classroom setting (See Figure 1). Yin (2009) described this organization as an embedded multiple case design. Embedded multiple case studies use two levels of sampling –the bounded system, and the people, activities, and documents found within that system (Merriam, 2009). This design provides a way to study systems within systems (Yin, 2009), which makes visible the ways in which nested contexts are influenced by external factors such as group composition. Finally, Yin (2009) argues that multiple case designs allow for more robust and compelling evidence than do examinations of single cases.

In designing this study, I was interested in the relationships between responses to literature and the contexts in which they occurred. To fully explore the nature of children’s responses across contexts, I conducted a detailed discourse analysis that provides insight into individual participation styles across two embedded contexts

(whole-group read-alouds and small-group literature circles). This analysis allowed me to interpret the focal children's approaches to response and the ways in which their contributions contributed to meaning making in each context. Typically in embedded case designs, the goal is comparative (Yin, 2009). Thus, in this study, I compared student responses across the contexts in which they discussed literature. Although I present evidence on general experiences in each context, the goals of this study were to examine affordances the contexts provided to individual discussants. Further, viewing each student as a single, embedded case allowed me to understand individual responses through historical lenses, which highlighted the individual students' propensity for particular ways of responding.

Figure 3.1: Embedded Multiple Case Design



Collecting data on individual cases embedded within larger settings allows for in-depth examinations of phenomena in naturally occurring settings (Yin, 2009).

Naturalistic inquiry allows researchers to describe activities that result from people interacting within particular contexts as though no researcher were present (Heath & Street, 2008; Stake, 1995). To gain insights into the complexities of cultural habits inside the communities being studied, researchers commonly draw on the knowledge of informants. Thus, through the analysis of multiple observations of read-aloud and small group meetings, as well as open-ended interviews with teachers, I intended to interpret influences related to individuals' responses to literature.

Research Questions

The following question guided my inquiry into the literacy contexts of a multi-aged, third/ fourth-grade elementary school classroom:

- 1) How does literature discussion vary across two contexts within one classroom?
- 2) In what ways do contextual features of literature discussions (group size and leadership, teaching moves, and text) support meaning-making?

Case Selection

The classroom I selected for this study is located in Meadowbrook Elementary School (pseudonym), situated in an established middle and working class neighborhood in the geographic center of an urban, southwestern city. At the time of data collection, the school had 459 total students with varied ethnic and economic backgrounds. Table 3.1

depicts a breakdown of Meadowbrook’s demographic population during the 2012-2013 school year.

Table 3.1. Meadowbrook’s Demographics.

Ethnicity	Percentage	Other Demographic Information	Percentage
African American	6.2	Economically Disadvantaged	53.9
Hispanic	42	Limited English Proficient	14.3
White	47.5	At-Risk	29.1
Native American/Asian Pacific Islander	1.8	Male	53.1
		Female	46.8

Historically, Meadowbrook has been considered an academically successful campus in accordance with definitions outlined by the state. The year before the study occurred, Meadowbrook received a “Recognized” status by the overseeing state agency for their performance on standardized tests. This label indicated that the students performed above state averages on standardized assessments. Table 3.2 depicts the passing rates for students in grades 3, 4, and 5 in the 2010-2011 school year, the most recent year for which scores for the state assessment were available.

Table 3.2: Meadowbrook Standardized Assessment Passing Rates

	Year	District	Campus
Grade 3			
Reading	2010	91%	91%
	2011	93%	95%
Grade 4			
Reading	2010	87%	90%
	2011	86%	90%
Grade 5			
Reading	2010	87%	92%
	2011	88%	93%

According to the school’s web site, as a school community Meadowbrook placed equal emphasis on academic and social development of students. To help students develop functional social skills, the entire school focused on the practice of a life skill (e.g. caring, common sense, cooperation, courage, curiosity, flexibility, friendship), or one lifelong guideline (e.g. trustworthiness, truthfulness, active listening, no putdowns, and doing personal bests). Teachers used literature and discussions to highlight the nature of each skill and a description was sent home in weekly take home folders so that the life lessons could be reinforced at home. Therefore, I assumed that most classrooms had participated in meaningful discussions about social skills, and that those discussions may

facilitate students' willingness to engage in constructive, collaborative meaning making events.

Teacher Participants

Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky (pseudonyms) were selected to participate in this inquiry because they provided both whole group and small group contexts, and various stakeholders (e.g. the principal, parents, and literacy researchers from the university) identified them as exemplary teachers. At the time of the study, the teacher participants, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky had co-taught in a multi-age classroom for six years. The year the study took place was Mrs. Mackendale's eighth year of teaching and Ms. Sadowsky's ninth year. They both completed their teacher certification at a public university.

In the past, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky taught a multi-age second and third grade classroom; however, the year before the study occurred, they elected to follow their students to the next grade. Thus, the year of the study, Mrs. Mackendale taught third grade and Ms. Sadowsky taught fourth. However, for all subjects except math, the classes were combined so that both teachers taught students at both grade levels. The classes were often combined during whole class lessons, such as read-aloud. The class was also the designated inclusion classroom for both third and fourth grades. The state regulatory agency defines inclusion classrooms to be those in which students with special needs are provided equitable educational opportunities in the least restrictive environment for the students. In addition to receiving special support from their teachers, students with

special needs also received help from campus experts. At times this meant that a group of students was pulled out of the regular classroom to receive small group instruction.

I became acquainted with these teachers when I was a supervisor for the student teacher placed in their classroom. Over time, I came to recognize this classroom as qualitatively different from other classrooms in which I had observed, in that these teachers provided copious amounts of time for students to build their own thinking around interpretations of various texts in a variety of ways (e.g. in writing, through discussion, debate, etc.). Further, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky employed research-endorsed reading practices such as read-alouds (Roser & Martinez, 1994; Sipe, 2000, 2008) and small group literature discussions (Almasi, 1995). Further, this classroom was a place where children were encouraged to read and discuss texts across multiple settings (i.e., in large groups, small groups, pairs, and book clubs).

Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky also hosted a student teacher, Ms. Ramirez. Ms. Ramirez was pursuing a degree in Applied Learning and Development from the over seeing university. She was a member of an intensive cohort that focused specifically on the teaching of reading and language arts. Upon graduation, she hoped to get a teaching job in an elementary school in the area [Interview, April 7, 2013]. The semester that data collection occurred, she was in her second internship semester. As part of her course work, she was required to come to Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's classroom 3 days per week. However, she often came on additional days to complete assignments for her university classes (e.g. conducting read alouds) and participate in daily classroom activities.

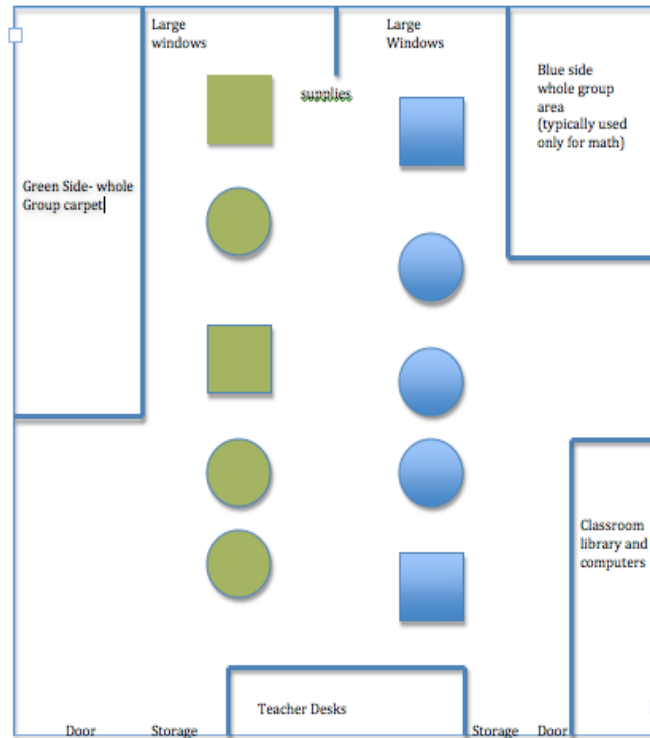
Classroom Context

Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's classroom was a comfortable space, composed of a large open room with windows lining one side. When children worked at their seats, the teachers often turned off the overhead fluorescent lights, allowing the children to work in the natural light of their classroom. A partition that could have been used to divide the room into two separate classrooms remained open at all times, with the exception of testing days. To help organize students, the teachers gave color names to the sides of the classroom. Mrs. Mackendale taught on the "blue side" and Ms. Sadowsky, the green side.

In addition to following the school-wide life skills system, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky followed discipline and management strategies outlined in *Tribes: A New Way Of Learning to Be Together* (Gibbs, Winter, & Ronstone, 2001). *Tribes* offers a step-by-step organizational system that is designed to help children develop social skills associated with collaboration and group work. The goals outlined in the *Tribes* protocol includes learning to help one another, setting goals and solving problems, monitoring and assessing progress, and celebrating achievements. As outlined in the *Tribes* handbook, the children sat at collaborative tables instead of at traditional student desks. Tables were either rectangles or circles, and a mix of third and fourth graders was assigned to each. Out of necessity, students organized themselves into role-oriented positions so that the work of keeping the table tidy was distributed evenly. The responsibility of caring for collective materials facilitated an orientation towards collaboration and teamwork, which carried over into their discussions of literature. Other supplies were kept in the center of

the room. Figure 1 offers a diagram of the classroom, highlighting where story time and small group reading contexts occurred.

Figure 3.2: Sketch of Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky’s Classroom



Student Participants

The student participants in this study were members of one, multi-age classroom. In the academic year 2012-2013, this classroom had 34 total students. Some of the students had been in Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky’s classroom for three years because the teachers looped up with their students. The classroom included 23 boys and 11 girls-- one African American, 17 Latino/a, and 16 white students. The class was considered demographically, economically, and academically typical in terms of school-wide statistics. More detailed descriptions of focal students are in chapter five.

Overview of Reading Contexts

Whole group context. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky read-aloud to their 34 children daily in their multi-age classroom, sharing responsibility by alternating days. The children gathered on a rectangular rug with the teachers' rocking chair placed in a corner so as to give the teacher full visual range. Read-alouds began with a teacher's invitation to "meet me on the green carpet." The teachers frequently reminded the students to locate a spot on the rug from which they could be a successful listener (e.g. "Meet me on the rug in 10, 9,") [Transcript, September 21, 2012] The children arrayed themselves in front of the teacher, either sitting on the large green carpet or at chairs placed around the perimeter of the carpet. At the beginning of the year, the teachers told the students that since they were bigger now, they might not all fit on the rug, so they were allowed the option of sitting in chairs to alleviate some overcrowding on the floor.

Read-alouds were organized as interactive spaces, and incorporated texts and text sets that had been selected with care. Teachers asked both purposeful questions and used strategies to engage students in talk, to encourage critical thinking, and to promote narrative understanding. Typically both teachers were present when reading was occurring, and it was common for the teacher who was not reading to join the conversation, adding more insight or providing a new perspective on the story.

Small group context. Book clubs were designed with the purpose of allowing students to practice responding to literature outside the presence of the teachers [Teacher Interview, September 15, 2012]. The teachers implemented a version of Harvey Daniels'

(2004) literature circle roles as a way to keep students accountable for active participation in discussions. The goal of Daniels' approach is to provide students a framework from which to begin conversations about literature. The teachers stated that they hoped the roles might act as "training wheels," providing students with support until they developed a repertoire of their own procedures for discussion. Table 3.3 shows a list the modified roles.

Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky communicated expectations of book clubs by role-playing how Daniels' (2004) roles were meant to provide topics of conversation, but were not meant to define the entire book club meeting. In fact, they modeled how to use roles as springboards for more interesting conversations, by filling out role sheets on the first chapter of a book they had read together. The teachers sat in front of the students, and engaged in conversation by reading what they had written and then extended their talk so that deeper analysis of text was evident. For instance, at one point in their role playing, Ms. Sadowsky said "Oh my gosh, that reminds me of another book I read where the main character..." [Video, September 28, 2012]. Outside of completing their assigned role, there were no goals associated with discussion communicated to the students.

Table 3.3: Literature Circle Roles

Name of Role	Role Description
Discussion Director	The Discussion Director’s job is to lead the group, retell the important events of the chapter, and ask good questions to begin the discussion. Summarize the chapter. Write down a few good questions that you think your group would want to answer.
Word Wizard	The Word Wizard’s job is to be on the lookout for special words in the story – words that are new, different, strange, interesting, important, or hard. Write the words down and look up the definition. Be ready to share with your group.
Writing Writer	The Writing Writer’s job is to write a diary entry that one of the characters might have written. Write a poem or song that expresses one or more of the character’s feelings, or write a letter from one character to another about what was happening in the chapter.
Passage Master	The Passage Master’s job is to pick parts of the story you want to read aloud to your group, including a funny part, a good part, a scary part, a confusing part, an interesting part, some good writing, a good description, a surprising part.

In total, I observed and collected data from ten small groups, each of which read two sets of literature together. Each small group comprised three to four students who were similar in some way: Either similar reading level, interest, or social compatibility. All groups were totally student led, and students were allowed to choose to meet either during Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) time or during their regularly scheduled language arts block. Small groups were held all over the classroom, and even occasionally in the hallway. Students were responsible for organizing and following a timeline for reading and preparing for meetings, thus at the beginning of each round of meetings the groups met to plan for their discussions. To be ready for a meeting, students were to read the selected sections of texts and complete their book club jobs in journals to prepare for discussion. If either reading or book club roles were not completed in the allotted class time, students had the option of completing the work at home.

The first book set of literature circles was organized to model and practice procedures and expectations. In this book club, the entire class read the same series of spooky short stories and discussed the text with classmates who sat at their tables. Groups for the second set of literature discussions was organized by both reading ability and the topical interests of the students. Groups were required to have nine meetings total, however some groups met as many as 12 times to discuss their books. The teachers gave students surveys containing a list of books on their individual reading levels as a way of ensuring that students were able to read developmentally appropriate texts. Students ranked the books by marking their top three choices. The goals of the second book club

was to provide students with challenging texts and a group of conversants who were interested in discussing books from the same genre.

When children were meeting during book clubs, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky walked around, observing the meetings. The teachers rarely joined meaning making conversations, as the stated purpose of the literature circle was to allow students opportunities to practice discussing literature without the teachers' present [Teacher Interview, January 28, 2012]. Several times one of the teachers joined a group to redirect conversations to make sure students' talk was focused on literature. Typically, this occurred when students' conversations were loud or appeared overly boisterous or silly. It was common for the teachers to ask things such as "Does this [the conversation] have to do with the story," [*The Brown Lady Transcript*, October 24, 2012]. There were also times, when the teachers stepped in to facilitate meaning making when they heard students struggle. Sometimes this occurred as a result of a teacher overhearing a conversation and electing to step into the conversation. For instance, on one occasion when a group trying to decode and use context clues to define the word "crocheting." Mrs. Mackendale happened to be passing by when she overheard students begin to struggle and joined the conversation by saying "Would you like to know how to say that word?" [*Number the Stars Transcript*, November 5, 2012]. Other times, teachers joined groups when students asked for assistance. Typically, students approached teachers when there was interpersonal conflict between group members. For instance, Javier came to either Mrs. Mackendale or Ms. Sadowsky to report that, "Selena is being bossy," [*Sounder*

Transcript, November 5, 7, 11, 13, 16]. In these instances, the teachers mediated the conflict and then removed themselves from the group.

Data Collection and Analysis

Overview of Data Collection

Staying true to the foundational principles of naturalistic inquiry, I drew on ethnographic data collection methods. The data were collected through participant observation, audio and video recordings of read-aloud and small group contexts three times per week over 19 weeks. I collected video recordings of twenty-two read-alouds and whole group discussions. I also collected data on forty-five small group discussions of literature. All small groups were recorded using small audio recorders, and were transcribed within a day of leaving the field. I attended, video recorded and took field notes on as many small groups as possible; however, there were times when multiple groups met at the same time. When two groups met simultaneously, I sat with one group and set up the video camera to record the other. When three or more groups met simultaneously, I sat in on one group, taking field notes, video recorded the second, and relied on audio recordings of all others to do analysis. I made sure to alternate which groups I sat with on various days so that I had field notes and video recordings of all groups. I also collected 12 student and 3 teacher interviews, and student artifacts (copies of student work and photographs of significant classroom artifacts, i.e. language charts). I purposefully selected four focal students whose diverse styles and contributions allowed me to draw conclusions relative to my research questions.

Data were collected in the fall of the 2012- 2013 school year. During this prolonged engagement (Marshall & Rossman, 2009), I visited Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's classroom three times a week during their language arts block. Each visit lasted approximately one and one half hours. I made additional trips during the morning Silent Sustained Reading time (SSR) to capture book clubs that occurred outside of the language arts block.

Data collection occurred in two phases: In the first "getting acquainted" phase (Merriam, 2009), that lasted 7 days, I documented learning routines and classroom practices. During this phase, I used my knowledge of read-alouds and peer-led small groups to notice and name the practices occurring in this classroom. I also interacted with the teacher and the students in friendly, thoughtful ways and showed interest in their work and thinking. During the first phase of data collection, I also identified my four focal students, Adam, Liam, Anna, and Mia. Students were selected based on the number of contributions they made during read aloud contexts. The selected students represent a range including students who added to conversations often and students who rarely contributed. Focal students also include two boys and two girls and represented classroom demographics (two White children, two Latino/a children). The second phase of data collection lasted approximately 18 weeks and consisted of identifying and focusing on focal students' discussion patterns across contexts.

Data Sources

Observation and Field Notes

Marshall and Rossman (2009) suggest that observations are central to qualitative research because they can be used “to discover patterns of complex interactions within a setting,” (p. 140). My role in this classroom was that of a participant observer. In participant observation, the researcher engages in varying degrees of activity within the field with the goal of remaining as unobtrusive as possible. One advantage to being a participant observer is that “the participant observer sees things first hand and uses his or her own knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed rather than relying on once removed accounts from interviews” (Merriam, 2009, p. 119).

Close observation of both the read-aloud and small-group settings allowed me to document the practices associated with each context over time. My purpose was to be able to hear what happened but not to claim membership in the group. Thus, throughout data collection, I tried to maintain an observer role. During read-alouds, I sat to the side of the children, so that I could see their faces as they reacted to the stories, but I was not directly in front of them. Similarly, when students met in small groups, I sat off to the side, only interacting with students if I was directly asked a question.

To record observations, I took field notes on a laptop computer each time I visited the classroom. Field notes are described as written, nonjudgmental accounts of what researchers hear, see, and experience as they collect and reflect on data during and after spending time in a social setting (Stake, 1995). Once initial observations were recorded, I expanded upon the resulting notes, giving a full, clear descriptive narrative of the

observation session to ensure that subtle details were not forgotten or lost over the course of data collection (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Merriam, 2009). As I expanded and revisited my field notes, I wrote reflective commentary about the factual descriptions, which aided in identifying emerging themes. Additionally, these comments helped focus future observations, which allowed me to identify relevant events in the contexts studied.

Students' responses to literature and collaborative meaning-making were of most interest during the data collection phase. Often it was not until I expanded my field notes that I realized how responses were formed separately or in conjunction with others. I found that expanding field notes no longer than 24 hours after an observation was important in developing thick, accurate descriptions of what occurred in each setting (Merriam, 2009). When it was not possible to expand notes within 24 hours, I returned to the video recordings of read-aloud and small group settings to aid in the expansion of my notes.

In an attempt to be as unobtrusive as possible, I did not typically interact directly with students. They knew me as a university researcher interested in studying about how children work together, and were told to "act like she's not even there." Students recognized me as a resource in the classroom, frequently calling on me to help them with spelling, find definitions in dictionaries, and recap directions. In an attempt to blend in and to help the students feel comfortable with my presence, I acceded to these requests. Similarly, when students asked me to help contextualize stories as they worked in book clubs, I participated in conversations. By not interacting with students, I would have jeopardized the potential to build trusting relationships (Marshall & Rossman, 2008). In

order to document how these interactions changed my role as a researcher, I kept a separate reflective journal documenting how my role changed across my time in the classroom, which allowed me to track methodological decisions. For the most part, I was successful in my attempt to be to be invisible.

Most of the students seemed indifferent to my presence in the classroom. However, some were curious about what I was typing. In fact, one student, Audrey, was so concerned with my presence initially, that she refused to sit next to any recording device or the video camera until she knew what was being produced on my computer screen. She worried that I'd share what I'd recorded with her parents or that she would somehow be in trouble if anyone heard what she was saying. I reassured her that the notes, cameras, and audio recorders were not going to be used to get her into trouble. Further, I showed her some of notes I'd taken and highlighted that they were not really about her. After she talked with me, Audrey became less hesitant to sit near a recording device. Other children rarely asked what I was writing. However, there were instances in which I documented students pointing to the cameras or the audio recorders in the middle of discussions as if to say to one another: "Remember, we're being watched." I documented each of these moments closely, and paid particular attention to the nature of talk before and after each instance. It became clear that when students were reminded of the recording equipment, the tone of their conversation initially changed to more guarded, school appropriate topics. However, the change in tone only lasted a few turns at talk, at which point their regular banter returned. Writing these field notes helped me understand

my role in the classroom and made me aware of how my presence affected student participation within and across contexts.

When it came time to expand my field notes, I transformed my initial notes into a table within the same Microsoft word file. I created a new column to house analytic memos. These memos included methodological and theoretical notes about the activities of the day. These memos helped to generate questions that further focused my observations. Table 3.4 provides an example of expanded field notes and analysis. In the left hand column are the expanded notes. In the center column is my analytic interpretation of the field notes. In the right column is the transcribed talk that occurred at the same time as the notes.

**Table 3.4: Example of Expanded Field Notes
Notes 10-23-12**

Liam- joined the conversation by offering an argument. As he talks, several students raise their hands, but he seems unwilling to give up the floor. The students appear to be very engaged. Their eyes are on the teacher and they are beginning to wave their hands, almost vigorously in an attempt to get the floor (Jessica, Gavin, Sarah, Maria, Melissa, Jason, Adam, Alex, and Javier). Liam continues to talk. He isn't pausing in his speech at all, and rarely takes breaths between his sentences. He says "that would have been totally likely" (seems to position his contribution as logical) that someone would have fished up the hook-. As Liam talks, the teacher continues to nod her head. She attempts to break into his speech, but is unsuccessful. She validates his contributions by saying things like "that's interesting." Zachary looks totally annoyed at Liam, he keeps letting out loud sighs and puts his head down on his desk. Other students, too, seem to have tuned out-

Interpretation

Liam's contributions seem important here. His participation style has implications for the direction and tone of discussions as a whole. Although his classmates were often frustrated with him, he engaged them in critical analysis of text, which seems to have engaged them in collaborative reasoning (Almasi, 1995). It seems as though the ways in which Liam questioned the text here added complexity to the conversation drawing students'

Coordinating Talk

Liam: This could happen maybe, some people What I think, there are 2 things. What I think is that this story doesn't really make sense because gold is pretty heavy, right? The waves would push it all in, it would be stuck somewhere down there, so people would have to be living there for so long, why hadn't someone just gone fishing and fished it up? That would have been totally likely. And also it would only be, like let's say this would be the waves, this would be the beach, it would only be like right here, or right here, and the waves, over time, it would have either gone down, and people would have hooked it up, or the waves would have pushed it up, so I don't see how he could have lost it for that much time, without someone finding it. Cause if it were just right there someone would see it and they would grab it, and then take it back to the house, then take it to the burial, but someone would fish it, but it's been there so, more than 100 years, why didn't someone see it and pick it up, or go fish it and have it?

The process of expanding field notes was not neutral (Marshall and Rossman, 2009). In fact, this process acted as an initial analysis that helped me to shape my thinking about the research questions and my interpretation of the data. On many occasions I used my expanded notes to engage in member checking activities. This included asking the teachers or the students about their interpretations of past events. To facilitate these member-checking scenarios, I sometimes replayed video and audio clips of the events in question, taking additional notes and working to reinterpret the events. These conversations helped me more accurately describe the events in the contexts I studied.

Video Taping

This study largely focused on meaning-making and individual responses within children's discussions, so the use of video taping provided the most complete data capture for my analysis of how students engaged with text, both verbally and nonverbally. Specifically, the video allowed me to capture subtle, nonverbal meaning making tools such as gesture and use of facial expression that otherwise would have been missed (Erickson, 1995; Marshall & Rossman, 2008). Further, video data collection provided me a way to revisit instances that were important in answering my research questions, making sure particular events were not missed, overlooked, or forgotten.

The video camera was used during read-aloud and small group sessions. Every read-aloud was captured on video; however, I did not have the resources to collect video data on the large number of small groups occurring simultaneously (5-7 meetings at one time). Instead, I used the video camera to record only small group sessions in which focal

students were participants. When it was not possible to video-tape small groups, an audio recorder captured the meeting as it took place. The camera was situated so that it was unobtrusive to the students. Because the presence of a video camera has the potential to cause behavior patterns to change (Merriam, 2009), I attempted to minimize its presence by leaving the camera up at all times, not telling students when it was on and when it wasn't.

When possible, I viewed, indexed, and transcribed all video data within 24 hours of leaving the field. Specifically, I put all transcribed read-alouds and small groups in a notebook with the date, time, and duration of the event. I stored all recorded data on my computer with the title of the reading and the date on which it occurred. From these notes, I identified relevant segments for transcription. Transcriptions included physical actions associated with responding to texts and student interactions, including physical body movements, tone of voice, proximity, and body position. Evidence of how this data facilitated complete analysis will be present in the following chapters.

Document and Artifact Collection

In this study, artifact collection included taking digital photos of the classroom environment and students at work in each of the contexts, photos and photocopies of student work, and transcripts of students' talk about texts. Additionally, I collected official documents such as testing and assessment data. Documents and artifacts also gave insight into the context being studied and the individuals who created them.

Interviews

In addition to collecting field notes and artifacts, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with student and teacher participants with the goal of understanding their behavior through their own eyes and words (Merriam, 2009). Two of the three teacher interviews were conducted in the classroom without children present. The first occurred over the teachers' lunch period with the goal of understanding their thinking about designing lesson plans and curriculum related to language arts instruction generally. This interview occurred in the 13th week of the study and lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The goal of the second interview was to increase my understanding of the design of read-aloud and small group settings with regard to topic selection, book choice, participation structures, and particular students and their participation styles within the class. This interview was designed to give me information about the reading contexts generally; thus I asked questions related to the design of these spaces. Included were questions about their goals for students in participating in both read-aloud and small group discussions. I also asked questions about the focal students' experiences specifically in the hopes of getting the teachers' perspective on these students. This interview lasted two hours and fifteen minutes and occurred the 16th week of the study.

The final interview, conducted over the phone, consisted of questions related to focal students' academic and social experiences in the classroom and occurred in after I had left the field. In addition to these formal interviews, I talked with Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky each time I entered the classroom, which allowed me to get specific

questions answered about daily happenings. For instance, after the teachers engaged in a discussion about *The Librarian of Basara* (Winter, 2005), the story of Alia Muhammed Baker, a librarian working to preserve irreplaceable texts in war torn Iraq, I was able to have a conversation about their purposes in selecting this text and their feelings about the conversation that ensued. Through this conversation, I came to understand that one purpose of their reading aloud was to give students opportunities to disrupt their current assumptions about events described in stories. In the case of the *Librarian of Basara*, their goal was to interrupt students' assumptions about war generally. When it was not possible to have conversations, Mrs. Mackendale, Ms. Sadowsky, and I communicated through email. Email conversations were similar to in person conversations in that they were typically written with the goal of clarifying events that occurred in the classroom.

I interviewed focal students both individually and in their discussion groups. Marshall and Rossman (2009) argue that because focus group interviews are socially oriented, they are more relaxed than individual interviews. Small group interviews lasted between 15 and 45 minutes, dependent upon the amount of time allotted by the teachers and student attention, focus, and willingness to be an interview participant. The goal of these interviews was to get an understanding of the group experience within and across contexts, so the small group stayed intact to discuss their perceptions of both contexts.

Some group interviews were conducted in a simulated-recall (Merriam, 2009) format in which students viewed a piece of video collected from the data and reflected on the discussion that occurred around literacy events. Showing video clips to participants helped remind students what happened during certain discussions of texts, which helped

focus the conversation on a particular aspect of meaning making. I used simulated recall when I had specific questions about particular conversations. For instance, it became apparent that certain students took leadership roles during the small group sessions. To better understand the dynamics of the group, I had a group of students watch video clips in which a group member took the responsibility for managing the discussion. I also used simulated recall to gain insight into the ways in which meaning was constructed in certain situations. I showed students excerpts in which arguments and collaborative meaning making were present, and asked them to help me better understand how they arrived at a stopping point for discussion. Often, students reported that they stopped talking because they reached a point of frustration and felt that their discussion had moved too far “off topic.”

I conducted individual student interviews in various settings, depending upon the class schedule for that day. Questions generally pertained to their direct interpretation of books they had read across contexts (e.g. “What were you thinking when you were reading that section of *Souder* when the boy’s father was being questioned by the sheriff?”) and how discussions shaped their comprehension and interpretations (e.g. “I noticed that at the beginning of your book club the group seemed to disagree about the setting of this story, did anybody change their minds by the time the discussion was over? How? Why?”). The formal interviews were recorded and transcribed. Multiple informal interviews with students were also conducted through the duration of the study. Often, informal interviews occurred when students asked me questions about something they had read. For example, Audrey once asked me to clarify a scene in her book club book

that described the demolition of the city in which the characters were living (“What does that mean?” Number the Stars Transcript, November 16, 2012). It was typical for me to respond to a conversation that I’d had with a student by saying “What do *you* think about that?” These informal interviews allowed me to act as a supportive adult, building trust with students, while still gaining insight into students’ interpretations of the books they read.

One drawback of using focus group interviews was related to inequitable power dynamics within the groups (Marshall & Rossman, 2009). On occasion, during small group interviews, one or more students dominated the conversation by taking more turns at talk, interrupting others, or talking louder than other members of the group. Thus, to further clarify information, it was necessary for me to conduct individual student interviews with focal students.

Merriam (2009) argues that the interaction between interviewers and respondents is complex. Neither participant is free of bias, predispositions, or attitudes that affect data. Further, in my case as an adult, I maintained a position of power in interviews with students. Further, because I was a representative from the university from which Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky had earned their degrees, there were certain tensions around answers to particular questions. Specifically, it is possible that Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky may have felt pressure to report philosophical allegiances that aligned with the philosophies of particular university faculty members. To combat these tensions, I positioned myself as non-judgmental, sensitive, and respectful of all responses. Further,

in all interviews, I positioned myself as an “active and sympathetic listener,” (Merriam, 2009, p 107).

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred in two phases. In the first phase, I used the constant-comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1984). The constant comparative method is inductive and comparative, and provides a systematic strategy for analyzing qualitative data (Merriam, 2009). Further, this method helped me focus on deriving new meanings from the categorical aggregation of similar instances among a data set (Stake, 1995). The process called me to use open coding to narrow and focus attention on the most meaningful units in relation to answering the research questions. These codes helped to shape my thinking so that meaning could be drawn from a particular data set.

Open coding began as I reviewed field notes, transcripts of read-alouds and small groups, interviews, and artifacts as a comprehensive data set, and searched for themes that transcended data sources (Merriam, 2009). During this phase, I generated words that described the nature of talk in particular episodes of discussion. As I coded, I kept a set of index cards with definitions of codes, indexing similar episodes. After I had created a set of themes describing my data, I laid all of the index cards with definitions of themes out on my floor and began the process of finding similarity among definitions. As I found commonalities between definitions, I went back to the data and refined the initial codes so that they represented new, collapsed codes. To do this, I physically cut computer print outs of my data and sorted them into piles.

The purpose of this phase of analysis was to understand the nature of collective talk within each setting. Codes during this phase of analysis included collaborative meaning making, argumentation, sharing stories, conveying emotional response, and answering the teacher's question.

Discourse Analysis

I also used a microanalysis of talk to better understand how individual students constructed meaning with and around texts. To do this, I drew on traditions of speech act theory and interactive sociolinguistics (Cameron, 2001; (Goffman, 2001; Gumpertz, 1982; Schiffrin, 1995). Interactional sociolinguistics focuses on the ways in which “language is situated in particular circumstances within social life, and how it adds to different types of meaning,” (Schiffirin, 1994 p.7). Further, it assumes that cues are habitually and automatically recognized and used by social groups, however they are almost never consciously mentioned (Gumperz, 1982, p.98). Group members are able to infer the speakers' communicative intentions and thus participate within contexts appropriately (Schiffirin, 1992). Thus, from a sociolinguistic perspective utterances communicate implicit definitions of the situation and how the content of the talk is meant to be understood. Viewing the response or reaction an utterance evokes provides evidence of whether interpretive conditions were shared (Shiffirin, 1992). Misunderstandings occur when people do not share contextualization cues. These misunderstandings can be problematic for people as they attempt to gain entrance into groups.

Interactive sociolinguistics allowed me to gain insight into meaning making structures and the ways those structures became part of verbal repertoires in particular groups and contexts. It became evident that Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky acted as gatekeepers in the whole group setting, validating appropriate responses (e.g. “I thought that too...”) and rebuffing contributions that were not appropriate for read-aloud contexts (e.g. “Is this a story or a connection?”). In the small group, it became evident individual students took over the role of gatekeepers, regulating the sequence and flow of discussions (e.g. “We need to get back on task.”).

Sociolinguistics also provided a way for me to understand the ways in which individuals used language for specific purposes within group settings. By acknowledging underlying conditions that influence relationships between words, intentions, and interactions, I was able to infer the function of each contribution in the context in which it was spoken. Thus, the meaning, structure and use of language in this classroom were socially and culturally relative. Understanding the function and interpretation of utterances was reliant upon what happened in response to individual contributions. The use of interactional sociolinguistics was important because it helped me to better understand focal students’ propensity for types of responses across settings. Below, I provide an example of how I analyzed my data through a sociolinguistic lens.

The design of this study called me to use sociolinguistics at macro (contextual) and micro (individual student) levels. In working to understand the group settings I coded turns at talk to get a deep understanding of the shared contextualization cues for each context. The example below illustrates my approach to discourse analysis drawing on

sociolinguistic traditions of an episode of talk in the whole group setting. In this episode, the group discussed a scene in *Weslandia* (Fleischman, 2002) in which the main character, Wesley, is offered a bribe to shave his head by his father.

Discourse Analysis of Whole Group Talk

Selina: A connection to the shaved head thing. My dad, we made a bet, no we made a deal, and if I read the book *The Hunger Games*, he'd take me to go see the movie again, or we'd go see it with someone, and he said maybe, and we were like ok, I'm going to read the book, but I must see the movie. And another book I'm reading me and a grown up made a deal and she said that if I don't like the book, I said if I don't like this book you're going to give me 20 bucks, because it was like a book about this thick and she's like, ok that's a deal.

Elvis: What if you just pretended to hate it?

Selina: I wasn't. It's not very good.

Ms. Sadowsky: Well, you'll have to see. Sometimes it takes a while to get into books. You'll have to wait and see, you'll have to let us know how it turns out

Table 3.5: Sample Discourse Analysis of a Whole Group Interaction

Sharing connections seems to be an appropriate way to join the conversation. By permitting Selina the floor both teachers accepted the contribution, thus solidifying its status as appropriate. Selina appears to have knowledge of the contextual cue, as she introduced her contribution as “a connection,” thus establishing relevance and gaining the floor. She maintains the floor by adding in another connection, thus she was permitted to maintain the floor until her idea was fully expressed. By allowing Elvis to challenge Selina’s contribution, Ms. Sadowsky indicated that it was an appropriate approach to discussion. His contribution argues that Selina might cheat the system, saying that she didn’t like a book as a way of winning a bet. Elvis’ use of a question calls Selina to respond to the accusation, which she does by affirming that she was honest in her approach. Ms. Sadowsky recognized Selina’s attempt as valid by responding in a way that affirms that she may not like the book she’s reading currently, but that she may grow to like it as she continues reading. Ms. Sadowsky’s contribution is evidence of her commitment to encouraging students to read. She then directly challenges Selina with the task of continuing to read the book so that she might let the rest of the group “know how it turns out.” Thus, she infers that the class will be checking back with Selina.

To understand better the function of individual students’ contributions, I identified instances of talk involving focal students within the initial codes that were generated in the first phase of analysis. I pasted episodes involving focal students into individual word documents. Next, I created a chart for each instance of talk and made analytic memos related to the work individual speech acts did within each context. I indicated the inferred intent of the speaker in relation to the context in which the utterance occurred. I then looked for patterns across individual students’ speech acts. Below, I provide an example of speech act analysis. In the following example, the students discussed a scene in *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988), a story about a small girl who realizes she has magical powers. In this particular scene the author had just revealed that as a four-year-old, Matilda read a series of books that are generally assigned to high

school students. Prior to this excerpt, the class had collectively expressed amazement at Matilda's ability to read such extensive texts at a young age.

Liam: It's a good thing she didn't read *Atlas Shrugged*. Do you know that one?

Mrs. Mackendale: No, I'm not familiar with it. Why would that be a good thing?

Liam: It's this huge book, written by this really good author, but it's all about, like, separation, stuff like that.

Mrs. Mackendale: Oh, okay. So she probably wouldn't understand it, okay.

Liam: But it's like a huge book, it's really good, but nobody likes it, because it's really republican and stuff like that.

Mrs. Mackendale: Oh, okay, so maybe it just depends your opinion on things whether or not you like it. I can see that.

Table 3.6: Sample Discourse Analysis of a Focal Student's Talk
Here Liam uses a referential link ("Well, back to this list thing") to initiate the exploration of a theme in the story world. The phrase "It's a good thing she didn't read" acts in opposition to the previous conversation in which the students, teacher and the author expressed amazement at Matilda's reading life. The use of the proper name of the book communicates a "knowability" (Schiffin, 1994). By questioning if Mrs. M had heard of this text, he's indicating a position of authority, and further indicates the obscurity. Marking the book as "huge" and "written by a really good author," conveys an increased relevance to the contribution he's making because the class had indicated amazement in relation to text

length and by the books' classifications as "classics" by the author and by the teachers. In the next clause, he gives information about the book, further indicating his understanding and familiarity with the texts. By including the clause ", and stuff like that," Liam inadvertently indicated that he doesn't understand the full nature of the text. After, Mrs. M takes up the section of Liam's turn that indicates the content of the book is confusing, he repeats the size of the book reemphasizing the relevance of his contribution. In the next clause, he indicates, "It's really good, but nobody likes it because it's really republican and stuff like that." His use of the contrastive phrases, "it's really good, but nobody likes it" position him as a person who likes things that not many people like. The linguistic connections between the turns at talk expand his initial contribution reiterating that he holds knowledge about obscure texts.

Looking at data through this lens allowed me the opportunity to see patterns in the types of responses focal students drew on to participate in the various settings. For instance, in looking at Liam's case, it became apparent that he was interested in making others aware of his knowledge about everything of which he spoke.

Trustworthiness

In all qualitative research, the researcher must incorporate checks and balances into the system of observation in order to yield trustworthy results (Marshall & Rossman, 2009). A variety of strategies was employed to ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Most notably, prolonged engagement in the field allowed me collect substantial amounts of data in order to identify unique events and patterns. It also increased the trustworthiness of this study by providing me with multiple opportunities to identify negative case examples related to my emerging themes. Second, the multiple sources of data collected in this study allowed me to identify themes across data sources, thereby creating triangulation of findings. Third, I member checked my data regularly. By

providing my analytic memos to the teachers selected for this study, I ensured that my interpretations were reliable. Further, I shared my initial analysis with my co-chairs on a regular basis. This served as a way to get expert feedback in the form of peer response for my interpretations. I have worked to ensure that the claims I made were supported by multiple data sources (Strauss & Corbin, 1984) and described the context fully so that the reader vicariously may come to similar conclusions about my data. Finally, I used a data trail in order to ensure that my analysis techniques were transparent.

Chapter 4

Patterns Within and Across Groups

This chapter presents literature discussion patterns in both whole group and small group settings in Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's classroom. In what follows, I examine the ways in which the children and the teachers formed an interpretive community (Fish, 1986) in which they collaboratively constructed meanings in response to shared literature. I also demonstrate the teacher moves that facilitated particular kinds of participation from students. Finally, I highlight various student participation patterns, indicating what purposes they served within particular discussions. I conclude with a comparative analysis between the two settings so as to demonstrate the affordances of each.

Whole Group Context

Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky organized whole group discussions as interactive spaces (Barrentine, 1996) in which students were invited to share ideas, make comments and predictions, ask questions, and respond whenever they felt so inclined. The teachers selected texts to be read aloud purposefully, including both novels and picture books [Final Interview, February 28, 2012]. They often drew together text sets (Short, 1992) that centered on a particular theme or unit of study, with the intent of generating linked conversations about topics of importance and themes that crossed texts. For instance, one text set included a series of picture books that opened to discussion about themes and topics that highlighted family traditions, culture, histories, and communities. All texts read aloud were narrative, though the types of narratives ranged

from historical fiction to fantasy. For a list and description of all read alouds, see Appendix B.

To gain the floor, students raised their hands and waited to be called upon by the teachers. Most frequently, their talk came as a result of two different kinds of invitations: The first kind was a direct question about plot (e.g., “What do you think will happen [next],”) [Transcript of *Chocolate Fever*, September 21, 2012]; and the second was a teacher’s spontaneous response to the text (e.g. “It reminds me of a time when I tried to cook something and it didn’t turn out very well,” [*Dumpling Soup Transcript*, December 3, 2012]).

Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky reported trying to ensure that they called on a range of students to share, but the large number of students made it difficult to be certain in the moment that everyone had an opportunity to share. Thus, they frequently relied on a “turn and talk” strategy in which the teacher posed a question, concern, or topic for discussion, and then asked the students to turn and share their thinking with a nearby classmate. They explained that their hope was that “turn and talks” would foster more student participation in thinking and in conversation [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2012]. The length of read aloud ranged from 25 to 45 minutes, with an average of 32 minutes across the 22 sessions. Children participated in an average of 3 turn and talk sessions per read aloud, lasting between 15 and 60 seconds each.

The teachers often asked the students to engage in some sort of written reflection after they had shared a text. Students typically wrote individual reflections that extended the whole group conversation, although the students’ writing was not always shared with

the larger group. Students kept their responses to novels in a journal, while their responses to picture books were generally written on sticky notes and posted on public charts.

Teacher Supports for Meaning Making

To understand the ways in which the children responded to texts, it is important to consider the kinds of supports teachers offered for meaning making. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky facilitated whole group discussions in ways that encouraged students to co-construct meanings, taking the responsibility for connecting ideas in ways that helped student contributions appear relevant in the context of the story and to the conversation. Both teachers suggested that they hoped engaging in conversation with students in a natural and collaborative way might result in the discussion or uncovering of literary issues and themes. It was common for them to prompt students to view their ideas from multiple (many in number) and varied (different approaches to response) perspectives by using phrases such as, “How else could we think about that?” “What’s another idea?” “Did you have something to add to (insert student name’s idea)?” They intended for students to share ideas and connections related to the story, as well as for students to generate responses to one another. Further, the teachers modeled their own thinking in ways that communicated literacy related concepts such as story organization, linguistic patterns, background information, and interpretations (Wiseman, 2011; Lysaker, 2006).

Student responses typically consisted of one-turn responses, as they answered a teacher’s question, added new information to the conversation, or shared anecdotes

related to the story, which were interpreted by the teachers. The teachers were active participants during these sessions, often taking responsibility for interpreting and responding to contributions. For example, in the following excerpt, the class discussed an event in *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988), the story of a six-year-old girl who inadvertently discovers a set of telekinetic powers that eventually help her to overcome an unfortunate home life. In the scene, the title character, Matilda, discovers her magical powers in a fit of anger aimed at the headmaster of the school, Miss Trunchbull. In the scene, Matilda focused her attention and energy on a glass of water, eventually making it fall to the floor. Shortly after this event, the narrator describes Matilda feeling confused about what had occurred, resulting in her going to talk to Miss Honey, Matilda's teacher. Mrs. Mackendale stopped reading to allow students to generate predictions about Matilda they might want to discuss.

Mrs. Mackendale: Does anyone want to share their ideas of what you think she might talk to Miss Honey about? Nicholas what do you think?

Nicholas: Miss Trunchbull's weakness.

Mrs. Mackendale: Oh, Miss Trunchbull's weakness, what does that mean?

Nicholas: Like, to find out what she's weak at.

Mrs. Mackendale: Oh, so to find a way to get back at her. To see what scares her, or something like that, could be. I wonder if Miss Honey would know. Ryan?

Ryan: Maybe she'll say, "I can knock over this glass, and it's weird."

Mrs. Mackendale: Oh yeah, maybe she's feeling very weird about how she could knock over that glass and maybe Miss Honey has some advice. Do you think Miss Honey would believe her? Show me a thumbs up or down, if Matilda said, "I knocked over that glass with my eyes." Would Miss Honey believe her, or would she just think that, I don't know that she would think that Matilda is lying, because Matilda is not a child that lies, right, but maybe Miss Honey would think that Matilda was confused about what happened. [*Matilda* Transcript, October 5, 2012]

Mrs. Mackendale initiated the discussion by asking a question ("Does anyone want to share their ideas..."). This invitation called students to draw on their own lives and conceptual understandings in ways that helped build comprehension within the discussion (Sipe, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). After each student spoke Mrs. Mackendale offered interpretations ("Oh so to find a way to get back at her,") that validated each student contribution. Further, when necessary, she asked for clarification on contributions that weren't initially clear. This approach to discussion communicated to students that Mrs. Mackendale valued their ideas and was willing to work to understand (Goffman, 1982).

In many instances, teacher contributions like the one above, seemed to add to the talk in ways that may have helped to deepen understanding about particular topics and clarify students' thinking for themselves and for others (Lysaker, 2006). That is, teacher talk was used to restate students' contributions, adding interpretations and filling in missing information so as to demonstrate the connectivity and validity of responses, thus fostering collaborative discussion that may have led to comprehension (Panteleo, 2007; Wiseman, 2011). Further, the teachers recognized that meaning making is influenced by transactions between texts, readers, and the social context in which the reading occurs (Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, & Rietschlin, 2008; Whitmore, 2004). Thus, they organized read-alouds spaces in which children were allowed to express and explore their lived experiences in relation to text, while simultaneously generating knowledge with other students (Wiseman, 2011). To facilitate collaborative response, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky helped to thread conversational turns in relevant and important ways by offering interpretations of responses and echoing student contributions. This type of teacher contribution seemed to act as a model for the ways in which students were to communicate during discussions of literature.

Teachers' Read-Aloud Style

Both Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky were committed to creating read aloud spaces that facilitated conversations about texts [Final Interview, February 28, 2012]. However, there was distinct variation between their approaches to reading. Both teachers asked open-ended questions that resulted in complex discussions involving multiple students. Although Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky had a purpose in mind when

they met students for whole group discussions, it was also common for them to follow students' leads, answering students' questions and focusing on issues for which students sought clarification. While in many ways they were alike in the whole group setting, both teachers had unique approaches to reading that resulted in different kinds of participation from students. These unique styles are explored below.

Ms. Sadowsky. Ms. Sadowsky read with an uninflected intonation. She stopped to wonder aloud frequently, inviting students to comment on and engage with her puzzlements (e.g., “Wait, I’m going to read that again, because that doesn’t make sense,” [*Chocolate Fever Transcript*, September 21, 2013] and “That doesn’t make sense to me, because...” [*Weslandia Transcript*, September 13, 2012], which opened the floor for children to build theories and offer hypotheses about what might happen next (Peterson & Eeds, 1989). This element of Mrs. Sadowsky’s style allowed students to collaboratively construct meaning, and provided spaces for students to engage in arguments. The following example highlights the open-ended wondering technique that Ms. Sadowsky drew upon when she read. In the excerpt below, Ms. Sadowsky stopped to wonder about a scene in *Weslandia* (Fleischman, 2002), the story of Wesley, a boy who enticed a group of bullies into friendship by displaying ingenuity in creating his own civilization.

Ms. Sadowsky: I’m wondering, this is kind of a prediction, if a seed is going to blow into his civilization and he’s going to take it. Is that what you thought (looking at Anna who raised her hand)? And maybe make the new food crop from that new

seed. That'd be really cool. Erin, did you have something to add?

Erin: Yeah, maybe the people when the wind blew, maybe the people on the farm, they didn't know, but maybe the wind like carried it far and then they took it.

Ms. Sadowsky: Oh, maybe. [*Weslandia* Transcript, September 13, 2012]

Here, Ms. Sadowsky opened the conversation by casting a possibility about what might happen next (I wonder if...). She often positioned herself along with the students as a possible knower, which promoted collaboration in meaning making (Aukerman, 2012). Students seemed to recognize Ms. Sadowsky's wonderings as questions being posed in order to generate discussion or share ideas. Here Erin, offered a possible solution or statement that explained Ms. Sadowsky's wondering. This approach to reading opened the floor for students to share interpretations that were informed by personal histories (Peterson & Eeds, 1989).

Ms. Sadowsky also named strategies students used as they responded to texts during read alouds. This technique made response strategies more visible for other students, thus offering scaffolding the acquisition of comprehension skills (Justice, 2009; Wiseman, 2011). Ms. Sadowsky stated she hoped that once she named and valued the strategies students used, other children might use them. In the following discussion of *Weslandia* (Fleischman, 2002), Anna joined the conversation to make a connection between the characters in a story and her own lived experiences. Ms. Sadowsky reinforced Anna's connection by giving her strategy a name.

Anna: Um, that kinda reminds me of me, and my dad normally tells me it doesn't matter what other people think so he's kinda like the kid, and I'm kinda like the parents because I think well...

Ms. Sadowsky: You kinda want to go with the flow? That's interesting. So you kinda made connections to your own life and to people you know, to the characters in the story. That's really interesting. It will be interesting to see if the story turns out to be the way you feel you and your dad are. Selina? [*Weslandia* Transcript, September 13, 2012]

Here, Ms. Sadowsky began by summarizing Anna's contribution ("You kinda' want to go with the flow?") and validated the response (that's interesting). Next, she directly named the strategy Anna used ("So you kinda made connections to your own life and to people you know, to the characters in the story"), thus making it visible for other students. Here, Ms. Sadowsky made visible the notion that readers use something from their own lives as a way of understanding more fully what a character was experiencing--feeling the dilemma. This strategy facilitates an initial understanding of the empathic work that deep comprehension demands (Rosenblatt, 1935; 1995). Further, by examining Anna's contribution positively and publicly, Ms. Sadowsky indirectly encouraged the use of this strategy during whole group discussions (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004; Reutzell, 2004).

Mrs. Mackendale. Mrs. Mackendale read performatively, stopping often to explain and check for comprehension. Her approach to reading aloud, including careful selection of stopping points, allowing her to clarify points in the story that may have required specific background knowledge that some students didn't have. For instance, in the following example, the students listened to a story about a day of memorial in Hiroshima, marking the anniversary of the atomic bomb dropping. Mrs. Mackendale stopped to add information that helped students contextualize the story by drawing connections between the celebration in Hiroshima and that of Veteran's Day in the United States.

Mrs. Mackendale: So, it's a special day in their city of Hiroshima. It's a memorial day. Kind of like we have days like Veterans' Day where we remember things of the past, like for Veterans' Day we celebrate people, and remember people that fought for our freedom, people in the military. So she calls this Peace Day a carnival because to her it's like a celebration and she's very happy, but her mother says you must not be happy about this, we are remembering people that died today. And so there was a bomb that was dropped on their city in, I believe it was, 1945, and that was one of the events that led to the end of World War II. And so an atomic bomb was dropped on the city, and many, many, many people died,

and even afterwards, these people died, and even the people that didn't die, some people got very, very sick afterwards from the radiation from the atom bomb.

[*Sadako*, Transcript Decmeber 12, 2012]

Here, Mrs. Mackendale went back and forth between providing historical information (“there was a bomb dropped on their city...”) and drawing comparisons between the story and familiar celebrations to help clarify the type of celebration being described. Her contribution was important because she provided information that helped build background knowledge (Duke & Pearson, 2002) about the day of remembering and the events of World War II. This information was necessary in order to fully comprehend the story, and is never stated in the text. Second, the comparison between Veteran’s Day and Peace Day (the name of the holiday in Hiroshima) provided a way for students to relate to the idea that some holidays are meant to serve as days of reflection. Finally, in this example, Mrs. Mackendale situated the mood of the story as somber by referencing a statement made by one of the characters (“but her mother says you must not be happy about this, we are remember people that died today.”). This clarified confusion about the day being called a “celebration,” when in reality the purpose of the day was to remember those who had been affected by the dropping of the atomic bomb. This element of her talk communicated important literary concepts related to mood, setting, and interpretation (Lysaker, 2006).

Mrs. Mackendale also provided comprehension support by explicitly linking events in stories back to previous events and shared experiences. This technique modeled

how students might keep track of story occurrences and provided scaffolds for students who may have been lost in complex story structures (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Lysaker, 2006). The following example demonstrates how Mrs. Mackendale used a think-aloud strategy to thread together events in *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988).

Mrs. Mackendale: So that kinda reminds me what we were talking about a couple of days ago when people were saying why isn't Matilda in school, why is she home by herself all day? Well, this explains it, doesn't it? [*Matilda* Transcript, October 5, 2012]

Mrs. Mackendale offered interpretations and modeled her thinking about what was happening, highlighting the complexity of the text and drawing students' attention to the ordering or unfolding of the events (e.g., explaining why Matilda wasn't in school). Further, she clarified the explanation of an event that had previously caused puzzlement.

Student Responses in the Whole Group

Students were given multiple and varied opportunities to respond in the whole group session. They were prompted at times to respond in particular ways; however, there always seemed to be an open invitation for students to ask questions and share individual, personal responses to texts. General themes of talk in whole group sessions might be described as collaborative and connected conversations in which students and teachers worked together to build meaning, to further comprehension. Both teachers and students drew on personal histories to verify interpretations of texts in ways that allowed them to arrive at simple understandings of the story (Peterson & Eeds, 1989). Further, the

class was encouraged to collaborate in working out agreements for interpretations of literal events in stories (Peterson & Eeds, 1989). However, students and teachers also engaged in active inquiry of texts offering explanations, asking questions, and joining collective problem solving sessions. In what follows, I explore the patterns present in read aloud discussions including: a) collaboration through connected talk; b) collaborating to explain and to gain footing; and c) authentic questions as fodder for discussion.

Collaboration Through Connected Talk

Students appeared to recognize the importance of demonstrating a shared, common purpose (Gee, 2000; Reichman, 1990), signifying topical coherence (Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Ayar, 2000) and establishing relevance (Austin, 1962; Searl, 1967). It was common for students to demonstrate relevancy by attributing their contributions to previously stated ideas (e.g. “This is kind of like Carla’s...”) during whole group sessions. To do this, students, explicitly threaded their turns to another speaker’s by crediting the speaker by name, and/or restating the idea or using language of “adding on.” Although these instances provided clear evidence of students’ listening to one another, as well as recognition that ideas can “belong” to a speaker, the attributions also functioned as a way for individual speakers to demonstrate the appropriateness of their contribution. For instance, in the following example, the class discussed an image in *The Always Prayer Shawl* (Oberman, 1997), the story of a Jewish boy growing up in Czarist Russia. The story describes the ways in which the main character, Adam, seeks comfort in the traditional teachings of his grandfather, as he nervously prepares to move to the Americas.

When Adam arrives in his new home, the illustrations in the book change from black and white to color. Mrs. Mackendale stopped to ponder with the group why the artist, Ted Lewin, may have chosen to represent meanings in the two different contexts in this way.

Mrs. Mackendale: So what do you think that means? They [sic] changed the illustrations from black and white to color? Notice the black and white is Adam as a child, and the color is Adam as an adult. Kelly ?

Kelly: Well, I actually think it's because of the years passing by, like he turned older because of the years, so people started to get colors inside books and tvs.

Mrs. Mackendale: Sure, that could be one way to think about it. It's a good signal for your brain to know this is the past and this is the present or future.

Melissa: Another reason I think it changed from black and white to color is kinda like Kelly's, well they didn't have technology, like more technology back then so it was black and white, and sometimes if it's old it will be black and white, but when they change the color, like it's orange, that's new. [*The Always Prayer Shawl* Transcript, December 7, 2012]

In this example, Melissa explicitly attributed her statement to Kelly's idea; however, her contribution was more restatement than extension. Thus, rather than acting as a collaborative scaffold, Melissa's talk demonstrated her bid for agreement. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that before new learning occurs, children have to have opportunities to experience higher functions on a social plane. Here, Melissa recognized that connecting talk from one turn to the next was important because she'd heard her teachers do it many times across various read-alouds. Thus, she appropriated the threading technique in her own contribution. This excerpt provides evidence that Melissa was working to develop an extended repertoire for conversation, although it appears that she had not yet fully grasped the depth at which the connection might be made.

Mrs. Mackendale's response to Melissa and Kelly's interpretations is also of interest in the example above. The children interpreted color as time and technologies in this text, however, color could have also been interpreted as a symbol of hope and promise. Mrs. Mackendale allowed students to maintain their interpretations, building on the ideas they offered, not making the children arrive at meanings they hadn't yet explored and offered. Mrs. Mackendale suggested that many times during read aloud sessions she held back her interpretations, recognizing that students might view her as the authority and thus taking what she contributed to be the "right" answer. Rather, both Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky committed to allowing students opportunities to wrestle with their own ideas and interpretations (especially when interpretations were relevant and reasonable) before they modeled more complex or conventional interpretations [Teacher Interview April 28, 2012]. Here, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky seemed

to be directly avoiding entering into an IRE structure. However, it seems that valuable opportunities to communicate literary techniques may have been lost in this instance (Lysaker, 2006).

The following is a similar example in that a student [Liam] referenced an earlier part of the conversation in order to build meaning. During this episode, students were discussing an event in *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988), in which the reader is made aware that at the age of four, Matilda has read an extensive number of texts considered to be classic adult fiction. Both the narrator and Mrs. Mackendale remarked with amazement [“So she’s taught herself to read by the age of 3, not even in pre-kindergarten yet!” *Matilda* Transcript, October 1, 2012] that such a young girl could read such extensive books as *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, and the *Grapes of Wrath*. Students engaged in this conversation by asking, “How big are they (the books)?” and by making general comments that compared their own reading abilities to those that of Matilda. As she continued to prompt students to predict events in the story, Mrs. Mackendale verbally connected students’ ideas by using phrases such as “Do you have something to add to that?” and “Oh, that reminds me of Gavin’s idea.” Eventually, the conversation moved to a new topic, however, Liam raised his hand in the hopes of adding one more idea to the previous conversation.

Mrs. Mackendale: So, as bright and smart as Matilda is, like we just talked about, she doesn’t have all those life experiences; she didn’t know that you could check out a book from the library. So, do you think she might

take her [the librarian] up on that offer [to take challenging books home]? I bet so. I bet she'll take one home. Liam?

Liam: Well, back to this list thing. It's a good thing she didn't read *Atlas Shrugged*. [*Matilda* Transcript, October 1, 2012]

Liam connected his contribution back to the earlier conversation by explicitly referring to what was discussed previously (“Well, back to this list thing...”). By using a referential link to previous conversations, Liam established his contribution as relevant (Austin, 1962) and was permitted continue to contribute.

Most often, students connected to one another in affirming ways (e.g., “Like Kelly said...” or “I agree with Selina...”) during whole group discussions. However, there were instances in which students referred to previously stated ideas in ways that challenged the previous speaker or provided information counter to what had been shared. For instance, in the following example, the group was in the middle of listening to *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* (Kimmel, 1994), a story about a group of hobgoblins who interfere with the lighting of a town's menorah every Hanukkah season. In the story, the hero, Hershel, takes on the challenge of lighting the menorah, realizing he will have to find a clever way to defeat the goblins. Prior to the following conversation excerpt, Ms. Sadowsky read a scene in which Hershel tricked the goblins into trying to retrieve pickles from a jar, resulting in their hands becoming stuck in the jar.

Ms. Sadowsky: His hand's just full and it won't lift out of the jar.

Selina: I would just break the jar because it's glass and you could just smash it.

Javier: What if it's plastic?

Selina: They might have not had plastic.

Ms. Sadowsky: Who knows? Look at this. I'm going to show you the picture before I read this. [*Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* Transcript December 19, 2012]

Javier joined the conversation to present a challenge to Selina's solution by asking her a question directly ["What if it's plastic?"]. He argued that a plastic container would not be breakable, thus suggested that Selina's solution might not be plausible. However, Selina seemed to understand the setting of the tale as historical in nature, arguing that "they might not have had plastic," in the time period in which the story was set. Almasi (1995) would suggest that such transactions between students presents opportunities for them to resolve cognitive conflicts that may lead to deeper understanding of literary elements. In this case, Elvis' contribution drew Selina's attention to the historical time period in which the story was set- a facet she had not yet considered.

Explanations as Collaboration and to Gain Footing

Goffman (1981) argues that speakers present utterances as a way of gaining footing or status within and among groups. Explanations in the whole group context took the form of individuals displaying knowledge and the group collaboratively working to clarify story events. Both types of explanations allowed students to gain footing so that

they might be identified as a particular kind of participant (e.g. humorous, knowledgeable, spiritual, etc.), and are explored in greater depth below.

Individual contributions that displayed knowledge. In the whole group context, students offered explanations in ways that allowed them to position themselves as experts on particular topics. Often students began explanations with referential links back to an original sources (e.g. “my mom said”; “I read in this book...”; “...I should know because I went to London over the summer.”), making them appear credible. This type of contribution was typically one turn in length and provided information that was in some way related to the text. In most cases, the explanation was initiated through a connection between the text and personal experiences.

In many instances, explanations were used as a way for students to show what they knew about topics, rather than as attempts to add to discussions. Hence, there were times when student explanations were only tangentially related to conversations or story lines, rather serving the purpose of allowing students to claim authority status on particular topics. For instance, in the following example, Ryan, the only Jewish student in the class, was called upon during a reading of *The Always Prayer Shawl* (Oberman, 1997).

Mrs. Mackendale: So, they say long ago, and we know that long ago
people did things differently. So, instead of going to
the store, they went to the barn. Yes, Ryan?

Ryan: I have two connections. The first is that I myself am Jewish, and the second is that Hanukkah starts tomorrow.

Mrs. Mackendale: Oh, well, happy early Hanukkah. And how many days does Hanukkah last?

Ryan: Eight. [*The Always Prayer Shawl* Transcript, December 7, 2012].

Peterson and Eeds (1989) suggest that being able to talk about events in texts in personal ways helps students recognize the significance the text has for themselves, thus Ryan's contribution could be viewed as an attempt at making known that this story has personal implications for himself and his spirituality. However, Mrs. Mackendale initiated the conversation in an attempt to establish historical background knowledge that was relevant to the setting of the story. Ryan's talk here had little to do with the topic the teacher has just raised; rather to him, sharing *any* connection to the story was valuable. Mrs. Mackendale reinforced his attempt at establishing relevance by asking him a specific question related to his religion and his contribution. Ryan established authority/identity by announcing that he is Jewish.

This contribution is also important because it seems that Ryan used language to communicate power and authority, and to position himself as someone with status and influence. Here, Ryan took an active social position by using the singular form of the "be" verb, "am," to claim his identity as a Jewish person, and, therefore, knowledgeable about Jewish traditions (Searle, 1967; Schiffrin, 1992). This powerful identity claim positioned

him as an expert in relation to his classmates when a Jewish old tale is being shared. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain (1998) suggest that public authoring like that exhibited by Ryan acts as a way to claim identity status among group members. Ryan's remark demonstrates the tendency for students to assert their authority on particular subjects by making claims about personal knowledge.

After this episode, Ryan was designated as the resident Jewish class member. Students and teachers seemed to turn to Ryan to answer all questions related to topics about Jewish traditions. For instance, in the excerpt below Ms. Sadowsky, called on Ryan to explain rules associated with the Dreidel game in a discussion of *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* (Kimmel, 1994). In the scene being discussed, Hershel engaged in the Dreidel with the goblins. In what followed, Ryan added information to the conversation that provided context and insight however, it remained tangentially related to the core of the story.

Ms. Sadowsky: Ok, so is Dreidel the name of the game? Ryan?

Ryan: Another symbol on the Dreidel is, I think, those four letters symbolize, Nes Gadol Hayah Sham, a great miracle happened there.

Mrs. Mackendale: Oh, wow.

Ryan: And in Israel, the Dreidels say something different, I forget

what, but it's a great miracle happened here. [*Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* Transcript December 19, 2012]

In this excerpt, Ryan's earlier claim of expertise qualified him to maintain the floor for an extended period of time. Here, he took it upon himself to add more detailed information than was necessary to comprehend the story, taking the opportunity to underscore his status as an expert.

In the examples above Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky supported students' displays of knowledge without challenge. However, when students provided information in ways that had the potential to introduce controversy, Mrs. Mackendale or Ms. Sadowsky intervened to clarify or offer background knowledge. For instance, in the example below, the class was preparing to read *Sadako* (Coerre, 1997), the story of a Hiroshima child who developed leukemia as a result of exposure to atomic radiation at the end of World War II. To set the scene, Mrs. Mackendale gave the class information about the bomb, describing the Americans' purpose of for dropping it, and its resultant effects. Michael's joined the conversation in a way that had the potential to introduce controversy.

Michael: Just so you know who dropped the bomb, the Americans dropped the bomb.

Mrs. Mackendale: Yes, the United States were responsible.

Michael: And people might think, uh, the Americans are mean.

Mrs. Mackendale: There's a lot of different opinions on whether or not that was the right thing to do. There was a lot of fighting between Japan and the United States. There was the bombing of Pearl Harbor, there was all kinds of things, so it just depends on your opinion if you think that that was the right or wrong thing to do at the time. [*Sadako* Transcript, December 12, 2012]

Here, Michael established himself as an expert among the group. The phrase “Just so you know,” assumed that other members of the class were ignorant to the facts of the atomic bomb. He went on in an attempt to instigate discussion by claiming that many people have negative feelings about Americans, presumably the nationality of many students in the room. Mrs. Mackendale seemed to do something important: She accepted the opinion Michael offered, verified it as defensible, but enriched the talk by reasoning aloud about how different thinkers can arrive at different conclusions about the same event—and different evidence to support those ideas. However, she did deny students the opportunity to discuss the moral and social implications of dropping the atomic bomb, which could have opened children's awareness to explore the implications of that political decision (Rogers & Mosley, 2004).

Explanatory collaboration. A second type of explanation could be were collaborative in nature, in that both teachers and students collaboratively discussed a scene or event in text in ways that helped bring clarity. The following example demonstrates students' willingness to think into problems in the story line collaboratively

to explain behaviors or clarify meanings. This excerpt was generated during discussion of a scene in *Chocolate Fever* (Smith, 1972), a novel about Henry, a boy who eats so much chocolate that he develops a chocolate rash all over his body. In the scene discussed below, the reader has just been introduced to Dr. Fargo, who has been charged with healing Henry. As the chapter progresses, it becomes clear that this doctor does things in unconventional ways. Ms. Sadowsky stopped to draw students' attention to the wording meant to signal the incompetence of the doctor.

Ms. Sadowsky: Okay, I'm going to re-read that because it's interesting (re-reads). So, he's saying they look like your typical big brown spots, but there has never been a case of big brown spots.

Student: What?

Alex: That doesn't make sense.

Ms. Sadowsky: I don't know, this doctor, it doesn't make sense, you're right, it's confusing. He's head of the children's doctors, the pediatrics. Yes (pointing to Jason)?

Jason: ...and he doesn't even take it seriously.

Ms. Sadowsky: It seems like he's not, Jason, I agree. The way he's kind of joking in a weird way, it seems like he's making light of Henry's typical brown spots that have never been seen before.

Noah: Well, maybe he's trying to cheer him up,

Ms. Sadowsky: Okay, I can see that, maybe he's just trying to cheer him up by making light of the situation. Maria?

Maria: Maybe he's a fake doctor.

Ms. Sadowsky: That would be the worst, if he was a fake doctor. Liam?

Liam: Um, well, you know how when some people, when they're 60s? Like some people, they get drunk, maybe he's drunk. The doctor's drunk (with a wry smile).

Jason: That's what I was thinking! [*Chocolate Fever* Transcript, September 20, 2012]

By re-reading a section of the text, Ms. Sadowsky drew the students' attention to a part of the story that highlighted the confusing messages embedded in what the doctor said. She opened up space for students to collaboratively pose theories about why Dr. Fargo might be inept when she made her own confusion explicit. Conversations like the one above act as precursors to collaborative reasoning, which has implications for the development of argumentation and critical thinking (Clark, Anderson, Kou, Kim, Archodidou, & Nguyen-Jahiel, 2003). Ms. Sadowksy seemed to accept students' theories as to what might be causing Dr. Fargo to be acting so strangely, and then modeled conversational techniques that facilitate collaboration and connectivity (e.g. "That would be the worst, if he was a fake doctor.").

The following example is similar in that, the class collaboratively worked to explain a scene in *Matilda*. Before this excerpt, the class had read a scene in *Matilda* in which the title character visits her teacher, Miss Honey, at her home, and comes to realize

that Miss Honey lives modestly. Audrey initiated a conversation in order to clarify how someone who might be thought of as living in poverty would be able to afford going to college, a necessity in becoming a teacher.

Audrey: I'm surprised that she had enough money to go to college.

'Cause, don't you think that would cost a lot of money?

Ms. Sadowsky: Yeah, that doesn't really seem to make sense, does it?

Maybe we'll find out more because Kelly noticed that this...

Maria: I wonder how Miss Honey...

Liam: I wonder if she had a lot of money and then she lost all of it and then somebody took it.

Anna: Maybe it has something to do with the Trunchbull, maybe the Trunchbull made all these teachers pay a lot, and...

Ms. Sadowsky: I didn't even think about the Trunchbull.

Elvis: Maybe she just made a big mistake after college, and she, like, spent all her money.

Ms. Sadowsky : Maybe she did spend all her money on college. [*Matilda*

Transcript, October 19, 2012]

In this example, Audrey recognized a conflict between her understanding that college is expensive and the description of Miss Honey's house indicating that she is poor.

Interestingly, the text never mentioned that Miss Honey attended college; rather, Audrey began with the assumption that all teachers must be college graduates. Ms. Sadowsky opened up space for other students to provide theories as to why Miss Honey may not

have money by echoing Audrey's puzzlement (specifically stating, "Yeah that doesn't really seem to make sense, does it?"). Problem solving sessions such as this one resulted in a large number of student participants, collaborating in ways that posed possible solutions to student questions. Further, responses to questions posed by classmates precipitated more connected turns than any other type of contribution.

Collaborative sessions like those above create a forum in which children are afforded opportunities to listen to one another think aloud. Vygotsky (1981) argued that the "higher functions of children's thoughts first appear on the social plane in the form of argumentation and then develop as reflection for individual children" (p. 157). Thus, Ms. Sadowksy's orientation towards shared meaning making creates opportunities for children to expand their repertoire for responses to literature by learning how to explore diverse views prompted by what they have read (Waggoner, Chinn, Yi, & Anderson, 1995).

Authentic Questions Acting as Fodder for Discussion

It was also common during whole group discussions for students to ask questions about texts. At times, these questions were requests for simple clarification related to defining an unfamiliar word (e.g. "What does daft mean?") or plot nuances. In these instances the teacher might respond by providing a definition or prompting students to use clues in the text to come to their own conclusions (e.g. "Based on the way it's used, what might it mean?").

Other times, when students asked questions, the teacher might open the floor for discussion by echoing confusion. The longest, most connected and collaborative conversations were generated in episodes when students initiated conversations with questions and were encouraged to pose theories and answers. Often these questions sparked sessions in which students argued for their particular views and ideas. These questions seemed to foster engagement and participation within the read-aloud sessions (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2004; Pressley, 2004). For example, when the class read, *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005), the story of Alia Muhammad Baker, a librarian trying to save the books in her Library in a war torn Iraq, several students had questions related to the context of the story and specifically the war in Iraq. Melissa initiated the conversation by responding to an image depicting soldiers on the roof of the library.

Melissa: I have a question. What side are the soldiers on? (Asking about the picture on the page)

Ms. Sadowsky: I don't know what side the soldiers are on, because they are wearing camouflage. So Melissa's question was – were those soldiers fighting for Iraq, or were they fighting for the other side?

Mia: I think they were fighting for Iraq because they are looking around trying to shoot the other people.

Ms. Sadowsky: Oh, maybe they were trying to shoot the other people.

Gavin: ...and I think if they were on the roof and, like on the other team, would they try to shoot all the other people? If they were on the other side?

Ms. Sadowsky: You know, that's a very good question, Gavin. Um, the war that happened in Iraq is very complicated, as all wars are, and um, just because there is war, doesn't mean that one side tries to kill every single person of the place where the war is happening. So, and like I said, it's very complicated, but just because there is fighting and war going on, doesn't mean that they are trying to kill everyone.

Ryan: Well, if that's true, then why would they let the other team on the roof?

Ms. Sadowsky: That's a good question, perhaps the people who were living in Iraq, maybe the librarian sided with the people who were coming in. Does that make sense? I know it's a lot to think about. [*Librarian of Basara* Transcript, September 5, 2012].

Melissa's initial question ("Which side are the soldiers on?") signified her views of war operate in a binary where there are opposing sides. Students joined the conversation to pose supported arguments about their beliefs about the soldiers. Students drew on a

variety of approaches to argumentation as they worked to provide Melissa with an answer. For instance, Mia based her justification on assumptions related to patriotic allegiance (e.g. “I think they were fighting for Iraq because they are looking around trying to shoot the other people,”). Gavin linked his contribution back to Mia’s and Ms. Sadowsky’s by using the conjunctive phrase “and.” What followed seemed to suggest an opposite sentiment from Mia, in that he argued that if the soldiers were “on the other team” (in this case that would be those in opposition to Iraq) “they” would shoot the other people (e.g. Iraqi civilians depicted). As in the conversation about the dropping of the Atomic bomb described above, Ms. Sadowsky worked to complicate the students’ notion of what it means to be in a war, by suggesting that the goal is not to kill everyone. Ryan used a referential link (“if that’s true”) to connect his contribution back to Gavin’s earlier suggestion questioning the plausibility that Iraqi citizens would let opposing forces onto their rooftops. Rather than letting Gavin offer a rebuttal, Ms. Sadowsky stepped in to provide insight and to further complicate students’ conception of war. This complication is essential in helping students disrupt assumptions and develop more advanced perspectives about the complexity of the situation (Mosley & Rogers, 2006).

Ms. Sadowsky ended the conversation about *The Librarian of Basara* with an attempt to continue reading, however students were reluctant to relinquish the topic. Hence, they continued to ask questions about the “good guys,” “bad guys,” “winners,” and “losers,” in relation to the war in Iraq. In the following excerpt, Ms. Sadowsky continued to field students’ questions.

Jason: Um, um did the war end already?

Ryan: No, it's still going on.

Ms. Sadowsky: That's a complicated question um, officially...

Jason: Who won the war?

Ms. Sadowsky: Also a complicated question. Um, so this war was against the president of Iraq, and his name was Saddam Hussein, and he is now dead. And Iraq is a very different place now than it was then. They have a different type of government, and the people who live there are being asked to live in a different way than they used to, so in regards to who won and who lost, I think there were a lot of [lost] lives on both sides of the war, a lot of people lost lives on both the Iraqis and all the other countries that were involved, So I don't know if I can answer who won. But the purpose of the war was to get Saddam Hussein out of power.

Sarah: Did they kill him?

Ms. Sadowsky: He is now dead. [*Librarian of Basara* Transcript, September 7, 2012].

Similar to the example above, this section of connected talk was generated in response to a student's (Jason's) question. Ryan directly responded to the question, which was followed by Ms. Sadowsky's attempt to complicate the notion that the war was officially considered to be over, but there was still fighting occurring. Ms. Sadowsky validated students' initial reactions to the text by taking up and acknowledging the complexity of

the work that the students did with their talk. The students' persistence in getting more information related to the logistics of the war seemed to cause Ms. Sadowsky to spend more time examining and unpacking true-to-life details associated with war, at the expense of discussing the deeper themes embedded in this story (e.g. the notion that individual bravery and heroism occurs in the face of atrocity). However, Ms. Sadowsky's commitment to maintaining the students' interest by attending to the topics that interested them most helped ensure that they remained engaged and interested. Here, students seemed motivated to discuss literature because they were allowed to pursue clarity on a topic of interest to them (Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie, Van Meter, McCann, Wigfield, Bennett, Poundstone, Rice, Faibisch, Hunt, & Mitchell, 1996).

Eventually, this conversation launched into a discussion of how people in Iraq are bad and the Americans won the war. Ms. Sadowsky interrupted this talk, by sharing that Mrs. Mackendale's mother is from Iran and is one of the "nicest people she's ever met." The realization that the students had a direct connection to someone in the Middle East seemed to settle with the students. By drawing on Mrs. Mackendale's familial connection, Ms. Sadowsky personalized the generalizations they had previously made. This seemed to help students expand their working understandings of humanity. They began to deconstruct the "us vs. them," binary, recognizing war as a complicated situation that is for all parties involved.

In an interview, Ms. Sadowsky referred to the episode above stating, "I just couldn't let them keep making generalizations about people; it just wasn't right," [Final Interview, February, 28, 2012]. However, both teachers recognized the importance of the

conversation above, suggesting that the focus on the complexity of critical social issues was essential in helping students build new understandings of the world around them (Lewis, 2000; Mendoza & Reese, 2001; McCarthy & Moje, 2002; Moje & Luke, 2009).

Summary of the Whole Group

The purpose of allowing students to engage in whole group discussions about texts was two-fold. First, the read alouds gave students the opportunity to think collaboratively with teachers and other students in ways that helped expand their comprehension of books (Sipe, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). Both students and teachers took responsibility for making space to question texts in ways that helped clarify meaning at appropriate levels for students. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky supported student contributions so that the group was able to arrive at simple understandings of stories. At times, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky sacrificed fully exploring all levels of complexity embedded with texts in an effort to recognize the interest and engagement of the students (e.g. when the group discussed *The Librarian of Basra*, described above). Both teachers indicated that they hoped students might internalize new strategies related to comprehension and divergent thinking as a result of participating in read aloud contexts (Vygotsky, 1978).

Second, read alouds seemed to be a place where students expressed themselves in ways that positioned them as holding expertise on discrete topics. These contributions dually helped add information to the reading event and created dynamics in which students were positioned as knowledgeable about particular subjects. Though there were

some similarities in purpose between how students discussed text in read alouds and in small groups, the approaches to conversations were often very different.

Small Group Context

As in the whole group, small group conversations often began with the sharing of a student-generated question, however these questions were related to assigned book club roles. All of the literature discussed during small groups was narrative (for a full description of texts read in preparation for small group discussions, see Appendix C). It was common for collaborative meaning making to occur, and students drew on their own background knowledge and experiences in order to explain their thinking. Vestiges of whole group discussion strategies remained; however, students seemed to understand the small group as a less formal setting, offering their contributions using colloquial language and introducing content that may have been deemed inappropriate in other school settings (e.g. “I think she’s acting like a moron.”) In fact, Carter described book clubs as “Just a bunch of friends goofing off, talking about books,” [Interview, November 21, 2012], indicating that he believed there to be differences in tacit rules associated with participation within each context. Students took liberties in terms of generating edgy questions that held moral and ethical implications (e.g. “Would you commit suicide?”), and used informal language to co-construct meaning in the small group setting. Categories of talk from small group sessions might be categorized as: a) regulating talk to maintain focus, b) questions facilitate engagement, and c) explanations foster comprehension.

Regulating Talk to Maintain Focus

In almost every book club, there was a self-appointed (unofficial) student who took charge of maintaining procedures. This student regulated other students' behavior in ways that kept the group on task and helped move conversation along. Often the self-appointed student drew on techniques that echoed those used by Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky in whole group sessions to engage students in conversations, such as restating one another's contributions. These students maintained power in the group by raising their voices and threatening to call the teachers over to the group [Field Notes, November 16, 2012]. All of the self-appointed moderators were girls, and most of them were fourth graders who had been in Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's class for more than one year. When considering the progression of talk in the small group setting, the contributions of the self-appointed moderators were important because, at times, they changed the direction or tone of the conversation.

In most cases, the self-appointed moderators kept conversation moving along and regulated turn taking. For instance, it was very common to hear these students saying things like "Now it's your turn (Kelly)," "Whose turn is it? (Selina)," "Okay, we should keep going," (Audrey), or "Please participate in the activity (Mia)." Many researchers have argued that having a teacher present in discussions of literature is important for providing scaffolds necessary for conversation maintenance and for modeling participation styles (Maloch, 2005; Panteleo, 2007; Peterson & Eeds, 1990). It is possible that the girls in this study recognized the need for a person who was in charge of ensuring the progress of the conversation. However, often, they assumed the role in ways that

allowed them the responsibility of determining topics of discussion rather than leaving decision making to the group (Lewis, 1997). This dynamic seems to defeat the purpose of designing spaces in which children might collaboratively discuss literature.

The self appointed moderators also put themselves in charge of making sure that each student in the group had fully completed his/her role. For instance, the following excerpt was generated in a book club in which Jessica acted a regulator of group talk. Jessica encouraged Gavin to expand on his book club role as Word Wizard by providing more information about his choices.

Gavin: End of the first paragraph.... I guessed that it was a part of the camera, and I was right. Then the next word was sockets on page 37, 37.

Jessica: And why did you pick those words? [*The Brown Lady* Transcript, October 24, 2012]

Here, Jessica drew on techniques similar to those used by Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky to prompt Gavin to extend his contribution and fulfill his book club role for the day. Her goal here seemed to extend Gavin's talk in ways that displayed his interests as they related to his book club role.

There were also times when the self appointed moderators attempted to provide curricular scaffolds for students in their group whom they might have felt struggled. For example, in the excerpt below, Kelly recognized that Carla struggled with reading. When Carla mispronounced the word *baffled* as barfed, Kelly joined the conversation to correct her.

Carla: (reading a selection from the text)... it was barfed.

Kelly: The family was barfed (laughs). Hey, Carla, I just wanted to say, I just have a little wish for you. Really think about what you're reading so that you understand what you're saying-- what's coming out of your mouth-- so that your whole group can understand you. Just take your time, okay?

Carla: It I think it means, annoyed. Like I'm so annoyed of the tapping sound.

Kelly: Yeah, but what if they were scared?

Carla: Okay, so I didn't know the definition.

Kelly: Oh, it's okay, want me to tell you what it means?

Carla: Yeah.

Kelly: Baffled means like afraid, but like such a surprise. Like Oh, oh God. (gasps) – yeah like kind of like that [Liam starts acting out baffled, too] [*Picky Aunt Pratt* Transcript, October 23, 2012]

Here, Kelly took her role as regulator beyond the typical moderator position. Like Jessica in the example above, Kelly mimicked strategies she'd heard Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky use when trying to support students who struggled with comprehension. In fact, early in the semester when the class discussed picture books as a whole group, Mrs. Mackendale suggested that "Good readers think about what they're reading as they read..." (*Song and Dance Man* Transcript, August 28, 2012). By giving Carla advice about how to read, she positioned herself as an authority, able to provide advice to

readers who she deemed as less successful. Here, Kelly seems to recognize the role of the teacher as someone who helps students develop skills necessary for comprehending literature (Panteleo, 2007). However, her approach appears to demoralize Carla's attempt at meaning making, which seems counter to the class orientation towards collaborative meaning making. Further, social positioning in small groups has the potential to result in limited engagement, and thus limited cognitive development (Lewis, 1997; O'Flahavan, 1989; Pressley, Beard El-Dinary, Gaskins, Schuder, Bergman, Almasi, & Brown, 1992).

At times the self-appointed moderator changed the tone and direction of conversations in ways that limited or cut off the potential for open-ended discussions (Erickson, 1995; Lewis, 1997). For instance, in the following example, Adam, Gavin, Noah, and Jessica were discussing a scary story about a resentful ghost who haunted the house he once occupied. The boys in the group began to explore connections that seemed tangential to Jessica (e.g. telling ghost stories; discussing fears about ghosts), and she attempted to redirect the conversation so that it refocused on the text more specifically.

Jessica: Okay, lets stay on topic, let's stay on topic.

Adam: We are but, we are but, we are. [*Winterton's Spirit* Transcript, October 25, 2012].

Here, Jessica pointedly redirected the conversation by telling the boys to "get back on topic." She included herself in the group by saying "Let's," though she had not been a part of the preceding conversation. Adam recognized the talk of the group as being on topic, but couldn't explicitly state why. Neither student could verbalize the idea that talking about connections related to texts was a form of "on topic" conversation. The

need to follow the rules seems to have been more important to Jessica, and because she had claimed the title of self designated leader, she was able to change the direction of the conversation. In the process, she silenced some voices and limited the potential for students to authentically share their interpretations of the story (Lewis, 1997).

Sustained Talk and Hypothesis Building About Authentic Questions

As in the whole group, the longest and most comprehensive conversations in the small group were generated in response to student questions. Researchers and theorists have long argued that when allowed to pursue topics of interest, students will exhibit extant engagement in discussions (Dewey, 1935; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; 2004). On average conversations generated from questions in small groups involved 12 turns at talk. In the whole group, significantly fewer turns were dedicated to addressing individual student questions (on average six turns at talk per question). Questions ranged from being content specific (i.e. asking about a vocabulary word, setting, plot, etc.), to students asking other group members to place themselves in the shoes of a character.

The most frequently occurring type of questions included those that called students to step into dramatic scenes in the story or those that prompted students to place themselves in the middle of moral and ethical issues. These questions resulted from the assigned jobs children were required to complete for each book club meeting; however, students seemed to ask questions that authentically interested them. The following excerpt provides an example of a question that accomplished both transparency and consideration in dealing with dilemmas. In this excerpt, Ryan asked his group to consider the perspective of Ellen, a character in *Number the Stars*, (Lowry, 2011), a story told

through the eyes of a ten-year-old girl experiencing the Danish resistance during World War II. Just before this meeting, the group had been introduced to Ellen, a friend of Annemarie's family who was faced with the dilemma of lying to the Nazi soldiers hunting Annemarie's family or turning them over, knowing that they would likely suffer in a concentration camp.

Ryan: If you were Ellen what would you say to the Nazi soldiers?

Audrey: Shut up and get out of my life.

Ryan: They had rifles...

Liam: (laughing) I can't say that. I'd probably get shot.

Ryan: I have a feeling.

Liam: Probably wouldn't say anything.

Ryan: Me, either.

Liam: I'd probably say "get out of my village or I'll punch you in the face." (laughing)

Audrey: That'd be suicide.

Ryan: I know... How would you react if you saw a Nazi soldier?

Liam: (still laughing) I'd run up to him and punch him in the face and grab his gun and

Ryan: I'd run up take his rifle, shoot his buddy and him, and and and shoot every Nazi and win back Denmark. (laughs) Without getting killed.

Audrey: I'd probably walk the other way.

Liam: I'd walk up to him and kiss 'em.

Ryan: That's suicide, too. Okay. [*Number the Stars* Transcript,
November 5, 2012]

Here, the group collaboratively considered the consequences in approaching the Nazi soldiers in various ways. Compared to the whole group setting, the students drew on a much more colloquial set of linguistic tools in order to make meaning, and talk about things that are often considered inappropriate topics for school. For instance, describing actions of physical violence (“I’ll punch you in the face,”) and discussing the use of guns were strictly prohibited in this classroom. Students were free to pursue topics of interest and draw on problem solving skills in authentic ways because they were not pressured to guess what the teacher wanted to hear (Mercer, 2000). Though the talk here is less oriented towards formal classroom discussion, the students here are demonstrating that they have deep understanding of the contexts in which the story is occurring. Specifically, when Audrey responds to Liam’s suggestion that he’d talk back to the Nazi soldiers and “punch them in the face,,” by suggesting “that’d be suicide,,” she shows that she understands the power structure and dynamics existing between the Nazi soldiers and those individuals that they hunted. When I asked this group about the experience of reading and discussing *Number the Stars* (Lowery, 2011), they indicated that many times they acted “silly” because the themes and topics were “too sad” to confront without the presence of a teacher. Carter went on to specifically state “You have to laugh or else, you’d just be sad all day,,” [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]. Perhaps the

reading level of this text was appropriate for students, but their comments suggest they may have needed direct teacher support related to digesting the content.

In many instances questions led to extended conversations that stretched beyond the intention of the asker, and even sometimes beyond the text. Because of the smaller number of people involved, students had more opportunities to fully explain and explore possible answers to questions and queries (Almasi, 1995; Almasi, O’Flahavan, and Ayar, 2001; Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 2000; Raphael & McMahon, 1992). Thus, in small group settings, it was more common to find instances in which students fully explored logical arguments. For instance, in the following excerpt, Audrey initiated a conversation that evolved into a problem solving session among the group. The reading for this meeting was a short ghost story called *Winterton’s Spirit*. In this tale, two friends, Winterton and Hassan, make a promise that whoever dies first will attempt to return with a report from the “other side.” Winterton, one of the characters, becomes ill and is believed to be dead. On the eve of the announcement of Winterton’s death, his spirit visits Hassan to warn him that he, Winterton, is not actually dead but is about to be buried alive. Hassan races to the morgue, but by the time he arrives Winterton’s body has inexplicably disappeared. The reader is left wondering if Winterton has risen from the dead or if he recovered and escaped the fate of being buried alive. All throughout this episode, the group refers to Winterton as Winterthorn.

Audrey: ...And if he was dead, do you think Winterthorn thought he was found? To bury the thingy or somebody took him.

Carter: Well, it would take someone a life saber equivalent because remember it was locked, steel apparently looking at the pictures it was steel metal and brick or steel and something, steel and brick and there was only one tiny window up there that could be opened from the inside, in fact it's really thin, and only Winterthorn could fit though there considering how thin he is.

Jason: I think it was.

Carter: I don't even know why Winterthorn if he was alive he'd want to stay. Say like he was going out to eat, he could wait until someone opened the door, and then maybe while the caretaker is looking at the other bodies, he could sneak out the door.

Audrey: What happens in a lot of those stories is people rise from the dead. Most ghost stories people rise up from the ground, but this one is an exception because apparently he can't get up from the ground once he's there, I guess he couldn't but usually in ghost stories people rise up from the ground.

Carter: I guess that's a little bit of reality to it. I find it finally, a story where a ghost is not trying to haunt people or something like that. Finally a story...

Audrey: I know...there have been so many ghost stories, now a creepy story. [*Winterton's Spirit* Transcript, October 25, 2012].

In this example, Carter answered Audrey's question by providing logical argument posing two possibilities, either Winterton escaped on his own or supernatural forces were at play. As he continued to talk (interrupting Jason), he further provided evidence supporting his theory that Winterton could have escaped alive (stating "he could sneak out the door"). When Audrey rejoined the conversation, she connected to Carter's idea suggesting that in the genre of ghost stories, people usually rise from the ground, but in this story that wasn't the case, making this story not a typical ghost story but a "creepy story" instead. Carter confirmed her idea by suggesting "that's a little bit of reality to it," making clear that this story was more closely related to real life than others ghost stories they'd encountered. Here the students used dialogic approaches to collaboratively problem solve in ways that enhanced their understanding of this text (Almasi, O'Flahavan, Ayar, 2001). Further, they drew on combinations of knowledge of literary genre and real life understandings of scientific concepts in order to arrive at conclusions about the story. The small group setting provided a context in which students could answer questions in ways that satisfied their own curiosity rather than attempting to garner approval from the teacher (Mercer, 2000). The two examples above demonstrate how students flexibly used comprehension strategies in order to answer questions that were interesting and provocative.

Explanations to Foster Comprehension

As in the whole group, students in small groups contributed to conversations by offering relevant explanations that helped clarify ambiguous scenes in the story. In many

instances, students called on other group members who they believed to be experts on a topic. For instance, Ryan was recognized as having pertinent information about being Jewish, thus he was called upon to answer all questions about Jewish traditions in his book club as well as in the large group. Generally, this type of explanation was a one or two turn event, and was qualified with some sort of life experience that cast the speaker as an expert. For instance, in the following example, Carter had just defined the word “epidemic” for the group.

Audrey: I thought it was cool to know the definition because I had no idea what it meant either.

Carter: How I even knew that I heard that word a lot around my mom when she worked in the fire ant lab, she’s trying to breed fire ants, to see how much to see what we can use that doesn’t hurt the environment to kill them. She’s like breeding them to kill them. She used to work there before she had us, the kids, me and my sister, and I heard that word a lot, epidemic, epidemic, hm hm, I wonder how much it would take them of this blah blah blah for them to become epidemic. [*Winterton’s Spirit* Transcript, October 25, 2012].

Here, Carter qualified himself as an expert by demonstrating that the place from where his knowledge came was a reputable source (his mother’s use of the word). As in the whole group, this approach to response appeared to be a bid for a particular position within the group, while also providing information that helped Audrey come to a more

complete understanding of the story. In this instance, Carter acted as a more knowledgeable other in a way that helped facilitate a more complete comprehension of the text (Vygotsky, 1978).

Other times, students used explanations to build meaning or clarify particular scenes or to further explain their projected solutions to textual problems. This type of explanation called students to engage in arguments related to the account offered by their peers. For instance, in the following example, Jessica and Gavin explored a scene in *Gregor the Overlander* (Collins, 2011) – a story about a boy and his baby sister who accidentally fall down a laundry chute to discover a secret underworld of New York City. In the scene being discussed below, Gregor has learned that he is responsible for going on a quest in which he will be responsible for fighting off oversized rats, roaches, and spiders in order to save his long lost father. Gavin offered a solution to the problem, which was contested by Jessica.

Jessica: I'd kind of be sad because I'd have to recuse my own father. It's like I'm going to go rescue my father, and they're like you have to protect this kingdom from a bunch of rats, and he doesn't even like fighting...

Gavin: Just get some pesticide.

Jessica: But he does want to go see his dad.

Gavin: I have an easy solution, go to the store and buy all the pesticide there (smiles)

Jessica: (Pointing at Gavin) You know that there is no store in the kingdom in the Underland.

Gavin: I'd go to the over land and get a bunch of pesticide and (moves his arms back and forth like he's firing a machine gun, makes a hissing noise with his mouth).

Jessica: How do they get to the Overland?

Gavin: Bats. [*Gregor the Overlander* Transcript, November 15, 2012]

Here, Gavin suggested a solution to the problem (getting some pesticide) and then embodied how he believes his solution would play out in the story (imagining the pesticide acting as a machine gun, eradicating the bugs of the Underworld). Jessica challenged Gavin's explanations by drawing on her knowledge of character motivation ("But he does want to go see his dad") and understanding of the importance of setting to the plot ("You know there are no stores in the Underworld..."). Jessica and Gavin engage in a discussion pattern in which Gavin is continuously called to defend his solution to the problem. This pattern of challenging other students' ideas was not isolated to the small group; however, students were presented with more opportunities to explore discrepancies fully. Specifically, in the whole group when challenges like these arose, the teacher generally took responsibility for moving the conversation away from conflicts (e.g. it was common for the teachers to return to reading when conflicts between students arose). Thus, here students demonstrated a maturity in collaboratively engaging in argumentation and in identifying emotional dilemmas relevant to the plot in relation to

this text (Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Ayar 2001; Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 2000).

Students also offered explanations to texts as a way to clarify individual interpretations of character motivations, behaviors and feelings. For instance, in the following example, Jessica, Anna, and Gavin discussed a scene in *Gregor the Overlander* (Collins, 2011). In this scene, the main character, Gregor, has been told that his arrival in the Underworld is part of a prophecy that predicts that he will be responsible for the salvation of the Underworld. The stress of this revelation causes Gregor to try to escape the Underworld, ultimately annoying the resident princess, Lexia. In the following episode, the group has stopped to consider Lexia’s feelings towards Gregor.

Jessica: I think she would think he was the warrior, well he did protest, well she was convinced that he was convinced that he was a warrior.

Anna: I don’t think that Lexia likes him being the warrior in this part of the book. I think she wants to help his father.

Jessica: I sort of think she thinks he’s the warrior and sort of not. But I do think she’s not allowed to be...

Gavin: I think she thinks he’s an idiot.

Anna: Wait, what?

Gavin: An idiot. I think she thinks he’s stupid.

Jessica: No...

Gavin: Seriously, he tried to run away.

Anna: That was in the path (she means prophecy).

Gavin: That's not something warriorly. Seriously. (everybody laughs)

[*Gregor the Overlander* Transcript, November 18, 2012].

Here, the group worked to understand the complicated relationship developing between Lexia and Gregor. Both Anna and Jessica provided predictions about the pair, but provide little supporting evidence. Gavin backed up his claim that he thinks “She thinks he’s an idiot,” by providing the explanation that running away might cause Lexia to become disenchanted with Gregor as a worrier or savior. Gavin’s explanation was generally accepted by the group, even though Jessica initially attempted to discredit his contribution. Providing explanations in the small group seemed important in helping students comprehend the story and interpretations of the story. This type of participation provided space for students to hear one another’s justifications for the perspectives they presented when they responded to texts.

Participation Across Contexts

Both whole group and small group contexts were spaces where students could try out different approaches to discussions of texts. While students drew on the same types of strategies during whole and small groups (i.e. asking questions and providing information), their approaches for these strategies were markedly different. Talk in the whole group settings seemed to be guided towards developing simple understandings of texts (Peterson & Eeds, 1990) and strategies related to engagement in discussions of literature. Further, in the whole group setting students were exposed to discussion techniques that prompted them to connect threads of ideas together in ways that helped

facilitate understandings from multiple viewpoints and perspectives. Experiencing connected talk in a social setting under the guidance of the teacher, promoted the internalization of these strategies (Vygotsky, 1978). Students seemed to recognize the whole group setting as a place where they might use language in ways that positioned them as particular types of conversants (Bahktin, 1981; Holland, Lachoicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). These bids for status seemed to garner support from teachers, which further validated positions within the classroom (e.g. Ryan's claim to be knowledgeable about Jewish traditions).

The small group seemed to afford students more opportunities to authentically discuss topics of interest in ways that fostered engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; 2004) and led to collaborative pursuits towards comprehension (Almasi, 1995). Further, the small group fostered variation in participation because students were not worried about answering in ways that were pleasing to the teacher (Almasi, O'Flahavan, & Ayar, 2001). However, the small group seemed to be a place where comprehension might break down (Lewis, 1997) because a teacher was not present to answer questions or facilitate discussion on complex topics. Thus each context seemed to provide a different type of experience that was important for students.

Chapter 5 Embedded Case Studies

This chapter presents an analysis of talk from five focal students, embedded in both read-aloud and small group contexts. The purpose of analyzing embedded cases is to provide detailed descriptions of key components of the larger case (Yin, 2009). Thus, analysis of talk of the five focal students provides insights into the patterns existing in the larger contexts. Also, the cases here illuminate individual students' approaches to response across context, providing insight into the affordances of each of the contexts of interest. Further, the cases presented in this chapter highlight the ways in which children draw on response techniques as a way to gain status and influence in the class (Bahktin, 1981; Dyson, 1993). Finally, the cases here demonstrate the ways in which responses was impacted by sociocultural influences.

Adam

At the time of the study, Adam was a fourth grade student who had been in Ms. Sadowsky and Mrs. Mackendale's class for three years. He was an only child with an intact family who appeared to have a strong relationship with both of his parents [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. It was typical to see Adam walk into the classroom with his shoulder-length hair falling around his face, wearing knee-length athletic shorts, a T-shirt, and running shoes, attire that was conducive to playing soccer and other sports at recess. Outside of school, Adam was a competitive in-line skater and showed interest in art and drawing. His love for art became apparent to me when I noted that he decorated almost every assignment with doodles of nature scenes, including trees, forests, and occasional animals. Adam reported that in his spare time, he enjoyed reading, playing

video games, and engaging in outdoor activities [Interview, November 16, 2012]. His reading interests ranged from comic books to novels with animals as main characters [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013].

Academically, Adam was considered to be a successful student [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2012]. He worked hard to make sure his work met the guidelines set forth by his teachers, and was meticulous in his attempts to derive logical solutions to problems. He made high grades and passed the state standardized tests each time he took them. He was also considered to be a “thoughtful” student [Teacher Interview, April 28, 2013]. Further, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky often praised him for his ability to express “clear thoughts” in writing (a written teacher response to his written book club journal).

Although he was academically successful, Adam was typically a very quiet student, often giving the impression that he didn’t want to draw attention to himself. In fact, when given the choice, Adam tended to work alone on school-based projects, preferring quiet spaces to think and reflect. Further, he had been diagnosed with a social anxiety disorder that caused him to be uncomfortable speaking in front of others, sometimes manifesting in a range of stomach problems [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. As an example of the stress and anxiety Adam felt in social situations, Ms. Sadowsky and Mrs. Mackendale reported that at times he had been brought to tears during peer-led conferences because he feared that by viewing his work, his peers would be privy to his flaws. They also reported that the thought of drawing unnecessary attention to himself caused him great distress, reporting that he was unwilling to cut his

hair because he was afraid “people will say something about it” [Field Notes/ Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. These anxiety issues had been common for Adam during the three years he had been a student of Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky, but the issues were exacerbated when his mother was diagnosed with cancer. Although his condition caused him to be reclusive at times, Adam seemed to have a small, but very close, group of friends, spending most of his time with Alex and Carter.

Case Selection: Adam

Adam was selected as a focal student because his case demonstrates the ways in which contributions to conversations may have deeper emotional implications than might be apparent on the surface. Further, Adam’s case illustrates the notion that the number of utterances is not indicative of the level of engagement in conversations. Finally, Adam’s case illustrates the ways in which multiple contexts provide differing amounts of space for developing emotional connections to texts that may be expressed in a variety of ways.

Adam often chose not to participate in read-aloud conversations, and at times appeared to be inattentive, although there was sufficient evidence that he paid attention. In fact, out of 22 read-alouds, Adam made only five total contributions, two of which occurred during a single read-aloud session in which the teacher read a story based on the life of Sadako, a child who suffers and ultimately dies from cancer after being exposed to radiation when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. The other three came during readings of scary stories, one read in celebration of Halloween, and the other, *Matilda*, a novel describing the adventures of an exceptional child who discovers that she

possesses magical powers. However, the small number of contributions did not seem indicative of his deep personal connection to texts.

Adam in the Whole Group

Adam was an infrequent contributor during read-aloud sessions, only making five total contributions to the 22 read-aloud sessions. On average, other students contributed 14 times through the duration of the study. At times when Adam was not participating his eyes were often cast down, and he often fidgeted with things he found stuck in the carpet. Further, Adam was never disruptive during read-aloud time, nor did he ever try to distract other students. Although it seemed as though Adam was not attentive to the stories, he was always able to contribute when asked to “turn and talk” with someone nearby. Additionally, it was common for Adam to look up at the teacher with a quizzical face, seeming to contemplate something about the conversation or the story; however, he rarely voiced his thinking in these moments. These hidden contributions made it apparent that Adam was, in fact, engaging with the texts.

Adam’s contributions during read-alouds could be characterized as explanatory (introducing information) or clarifying (reshaping his own or others’ contributions). In all but one instance, Adam positioned his talk as fact-based, using declarative statements to deliver information that was relevant to the story.

On the surface, Adam’s turns at talk were delivered without emphasis and were flat and uninflected. However, as I got to know Adam better outside the context of read-alouds, I began to understand Adam’s contributions as based in his need to discuss a subject or situation that was causing him deep emotional unrest. When I confirmed this

with Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky, they suggested that Adam's comments during read-alouds were carefully placed, stating, "If Adam has something to say, it comes from deep within him. He is very thoughtful and reflective and he thinks about things a lot" [Teacher Interview, April 28, 2013]. Dutro (2008) argues that responses from "deep within" act as testimonials, calling group members to bear witness to the evocation of response, validating the reader's interpretation. Thus, Adam's careful choices in choosing when to participate often extended beyond a passive exchange of information; rather, many of his turns were constructed in response to internal crises that shook his emotional foundation. Further, emotional responses couched in explanatory contributions were also typical as Adam participated in small groups, though the small group afforded Adam the opportunity to express his emotions in a more explicit and direct way.

Offering Explanations

In two of his five contributions to the read-alouds, Adam offered an explanation of a circumstance in the text. In both of the following examples, Adam provided information without interpreting or analyzing, giving the illusion that what he said could be proven true. Further, the information was given to the group in ways that offered little opportunity for others to contest or challenge what he said. While both contributions appeared to be straightforward explanations, each mirrored a personal crisis that Adam was experiencing. For instance, the following excerpt was generated as Adam listened to *Sadako* (Coerr, 1997), the story of a Hiroshima child who developed leukemia as a result of exposure to the atomic radiation at the end of World War II. The subject of the story

was deeply personal to Adam because of the parallels between the main character's situation and his mother's. Adam decided to join the conversation at a juncture in the story in which Sadako's family begins to understand the severity of her condition, and contemplates treatment options. In the story, the characters express hope that Sadako will be able to overcome the illness.

Mrs. Mackendale : Yes. So, it can be caused by radiation, so it causes, it can cause cells, you can kind of think about it this way, cells to become sick.

Ryan: Like mutate?

Mrs. Mackendale: Yes, and mutate, and they are not regular anymore. But the radiation can also kill those tumors or those cells. So, they can cause those cells to mutate, or not become healthy anymore, but then they can also kill the cells, depending on...so when people go through radiation to cure cancer, it makes the person very, very sick. Even though they're trying to get rid of those cancerous cells, it also makes the person very sick, also. So, yeah, it's kinda weird to think about how it can cause it, but also cure it as well. And there are places in Austin where you can go and see doctors, and get radiation, and cure cancer, but one of the best schools and best medical centers is in Houston, and that's

where a lot of people like to go is the M.D. Anderson Center in Houston. So, yeah, it's kinda a confusing thing to think that it can cause it, but also cure it.

Adam?

Adam: Um, I was going to say that if it's true that she actually does have leukemia, um then I know, I've read some things online, some articles, that some people die who have leukemia, so it's a dangerous disease. [*Sadako* Transcript, December 12, 2012]

Here Adam attempted to position his comment as fact-based by citing online articles that he had read about the topic. Further, he supported the characters' emotional distress by confirming "it's a dangerous disease," suggesting it is something to worry about. Here, Adam's contribution could be viewed as a testimony that attempted to build a story of empathy towards the characters' expressions of fear and grief (Dutro, 2008). He shared information that closely tied his experience with that of the characters, calling others to attend to and recognize the severity of Sadako's situation. Researchers have argued that when deep, personal connections to literature are shared and examined, readers have opportunities to develop deeper understandings of the human condition (Rosenblatt, 1938, 1995) as well as to experience compassion for the individual sharing the response (Dutro, 2008). Such an orientation towards texts calls readers to understand texts as works written to help readers understand the ways in which their responses to the conditions of characters are reflective of their own internal realities (Caruth, 1996;

Greene, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1938, 1995). However, Adam's connection to the story here was hidden beneath the surface of his response, which appeared to be a direct attempt at providing information. While the recent diagnosis of his mother affected? him greatly [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013], he had never mentioned her directly in class or mentioned that her diagnosis might be the reason he was looking things up online."

When the opportunity to express a connection arose, Adam hid the personal nature of his response to avoid undue attention.

The following example is similar in that in it, Adam delivered an (no-doubt) emotional response to texts in a stoic and seemingly objective manner. The excerpt below was generated as the class discussed a scene from *A Crack in the Wall* (Haggerty, 1993), a story about a boy who moves from a home into a dilapidated apartment that has a huge crack in the wall. In the story, the boy uses foil gum wrappers, fashioned like Christmas tree ornaments, to transform the crack into a tree mural that becomes a Christmas gift for his overburdened mother. Mrs. Mackendale stopped at a juncture in the text just after Carlos, the main character, expresses stress about moving to the apartment, and his mother is depicted as worrying about Christmas quickly approaching. The author never explicitly indicates why Carlos's mother is so concerned, which gave Adam the opportunity to raise his hand and weigh in.

Mrs. Mackendale: Why do you suppose that Mama is worried that Christmas is almost here? Adam, what do you think?

Adam: Because that's usually a time, it's one of the most expensive times of the year, and she's having trouble getting a home and a lot of financial problems.

Mrs. Mackendale: Yeah, so that could be a very stressful time, you know she's already stressed out and worried about not having a job, so I can see that you're right Christmas is a very expensive time of year. I can see how that would cause her a lot of stress and worry.

[*A Crack in the Wall* Transcript, December 6, 2012]

Here, Adam drew attention to the fact that the mother might feel anxiety and stress related to the holiday season, thus displaying his ability to empathize with critical events in the story. Researchers have argued that contributions such as these might act as fodder for the discussion of critical social issues such as poverty (Rogers & Mosley, 2006). However, Mrs. Mackendale elected to steer the conversation to safer ground (Dutro, 2008), avoiding discussions related to the social and political implications tied to the characters' situations.

While this contribution seems to be a direct answer to Mrs. Mackendale's question, like the example above, Adam's choice to contribute during this episode seems to be related to a connection between himself and the stress the character expresses as he moves into a new home and experiences uncertain and changing financial situations. In an interview, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky told me that Adam too had experienced moving into a new space and frequently made comments about his family's

financial situation which had caused him great anxiety. They reported having to have a conversation with Adam about changing locations, and the pros and cons of living in houses and apartments [Teacher Interview, April 28, 2013]. It was also evident that Adam understood the relationship between stress and economic strain. It was common to hear Adam report that things were “too expensive” or that his family “can’t afford that.”

In both of the above examples, Adam’s life experiences could be mapped onto those of the characters. These contributions demonstrate how responses are constructed in accordance with those events in stories that most closely resonate with the reader’s lived experiences (Rosenblatt, 1938; 1995). Further, Adam’s responses here show the ways in which the medium of literature allows readers to participate in imaginary situations through descriptions of character crisis in ways that allow for deeper exploration of themselves (Rosenblatt, 1938). For Adam, these instances were not an effort to draw attention to himself; rather, he spoke in ways that acknowledged the weight and importance of the emotional turmoil expressed by the characters (Caruth, 1996). Thus, he chose to deliver his connections in an uninflected tone. In many ways, Adam’s lack of emotional expression in these moments served his need to remain inconspicuous.

Offering Clarification

In the whole group, Adam also offered clarification when students misinterpreted an element of the text or expressed confusion. In these instances, Adam expounded upon views, engaged in arguments, and offered interpretations related to others’ contributions to the discussion. Adam’s attempts at clarifying demonstrate that he listened carefully to other students’ contributions in ways that facilitated cooperative meaning-making

(Wiseman, 2011). For instance, as the above conversation about *Sadako* continued, Adam joined in after Jason stopped Mrs. Mackendale's reading to ask a question about an image in the text.

Ms. Mackendale: Jason?

Jason: Back in the book it showed pictures of Sadako's grandma dead, and it was sort of confusing because when you get hit by atomic bombs you disappear and all that's left is your shadow, and it showed her on the ground. Like still there.

Adam: I think that's her when she fainted.

Ms. Mackendale: Oh, okay, so, there's a couple of pictures of people laying down. In the very beginning, this is her brother sleeping in bed, and let's go back and see where else. This is the other picture, this is Sadako in bed, kinda worrying to herself. And then this is where Sadako fell when she was running. So does that help? I think it was all pictures of other people, but I can see what you're saying. [*Sadako* Transcript, December 12, 2012]

Adam responded to Jason's statement without raising his hand, rather looking right at Jason, offering another interpretation of the image. Here, he took on the role of a more knowledgeable other, providing relevant information that clarified a point of confusion

(Vygotsky, 1978). He positioned his contribution as a possibility by using the words “I think” rather than as a fact, thus communicating that he spoke as a collaborator rather than as a purveyor of knowledge. Adam’s contribution was important here because it helped further Jason’s comprehension of the text.

Similarly, in the response below, Adam stepped in to provide information that might clarify confusion and mediate a conflict. The following excerpt was part of a larger discussion initiated by Liam that sparked a debate among the group. As several students began to weigh in, the student teacher, Ms. Ramirez, attempted to mediate the conversation. This excerpt from the conversation was generated as the group discussed a story in which a ghost haunted the ocean shoreline, looking for his lost golden hook. Liam raised an issue with the text, arguing that a heavy golden hook would be easy to find because it couldn’t have been displaced that far from the shore. The conversation lasted approximately four and a half minutes, becoming heated and uncomfortable at times as students both supported and challenged Liam’s response. Adam joined the conversation just as it was beginning to wind down (at about the fourth minute):

Liam: I know, but if it sunk to the bottom...

Ms. Ramirez: Hey Liam, I’m going to interrupt you. Everyone understands what Liam’s point is: he’s wondering why no one has found it, we’ve discussed that. Jerry? Adam?

Adam: If the hook were actually real gold it probably wouldn’t be able to wash into the sand unless the waves were really strong, and if it were just painted gold, the paint would

have just washed off by now. So they wouldn't really know.

Ms. Ramirez: Yeah, so maybe they didn't know. Alex? [citation missing]

Here, Adam lifted two opposing arguments, the first of which suggested the hook was too heavy to be washed out to sea, and the second stating that if the hook was just painted gold, that the paint would have washed off. Adam presented both arguments in a way that made each seem to be logical possibilities, providing clarity to both sides of the argument. He didn't explicitly align with either; rather, he provided evidence that both scenarios were possible. Again, Adam's contribution here appeared to be based in logic. Adam's contributions here seemed to mirror those described by researchers who categorized teacher's roles in read-alouds, in that he took the responsibility of validating attempts at responses and then offered interpretations that furthered other students' understandings about the story (Sipe, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). His role as a clarifier was important because he mediated understandings in ways that helped facilitate deeper comprehension by other students (Vygotsky, 1978).

Although Adam was an infrequent participant in read-aloud contexts, his contributions were always meaningful. In every case, his contributions were explanatory, explaining something to another student directly or to offer information to the group. Each of his turns at talk was voluntary and presented as factual contributions to the conversation. He was careful to maintain relevance in his contributions, and rarely expressed emotional connections to the texts or shared personal experiences that mirrored

those of the characters. However, after getting to know Adam as a person outside of the context of read-alouds, it became apparent that his contributions came from a deeper, more emotional place within him.

Adam in Small Groups

Adam was a frequent participant in small group settings. In fact, it was common for him to speak at least once during every group exchange. Many researchers have argued that increased participation in small group settings might be attributed to the notion that whole group discussions are anxiety-producing for children (Almasi, O’Flahavan, & Ayar, 2001). Although the frequency of participation increased, Adam’s approach to response seemed to remain consistent across both spaces. Thus, similar to his participation in read-alouds, Adam’s contributions to book club conversations were mostly explanatory in nature. However, the small group context seemed to be a place where Adam felt secure in expressing his emotions more explicitly (Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 2001; Raphael & McMahon, 1992; Wells, 2001). Often, his contributions during book clubs were obvious connections to texts in which he stated or described thoughts and feelings. Further, small groups made room for Adam to present and defend arguments related to his reading responses. The following sections present examples of Adam as an expressive or clarifying participant in small groups.

Adam’s first literature circle comprised of Gavin, Jessica, and Noah, read and met at their table every day for one week during the class’s designated reading time. As a participant in this group, Adam explored existential questions about life and death and also discussed fears related to the experiences of the characters in the texts. Adam’s

second group met outside the classroom in the hallway and was comprised of Javier, Selina, and Maria. This group read *Souder* (Armstrong, 1968), a Newberry Award-winning novel that traces the struggles of an African American family in the 19th century South. *Souder* was chosen based on interest and reading level [Book Survey, 10-20-12; Teacher Interview, 1-15-13]. This group met 11 times over the course of two weeks, and came together to do a group project on the book over two days.

Expressing Emotion

When Adam participated in small groups, it was common to hear him discuss worries, fears, and anxieties related to characters' situations. At times, this manifested when Adam made explicit emotional connections with the texts or expressed judgment in relation to character behavior. Both approaches were cast using emotive language describing how he felt about particular events in stories.

The following excerpt came from a small group discussion about a short story titled "Winterton's Spirit." In this tale, two friends, Winterton and Hassan, make a promise that whoever dies first will attempt to return with a report from the "other side" Winterton, one of the characters, becomes ill and is believed to be dead. On the eve of the announcement of Winterton's death, his spirit visits Hassan to warn him that he, Winterton, is not actually dead but is about to be buried alive. Hassan races to the morgue, but by the time he arrives Winterton's body has inexplicably disappeared. The reader is left wondering if Winterton has risen from the dead or if he recovered and escaped the fate of being buried alive. As Adam's group discussed this tale, several of them began sharing their own scary stories.

Adam: Once I was sitting in the living room and there was a window in the bathroom, it was really foggy and you couldn't really actually see through it, but I saw this white thing.

Gavin: At night sometimes I get like uhoh uhoh uhoh, I'm going to die tonight.

Adam: I do, too.

Noah: I feel like when I'm like under my blanket, I feel like I don't know.

Adam: Sometimes I feel like someone is going to be underneath my bed, so I always look out so that I can see whatever is coming.

Noah: And I have a bunk bed, so I never put my legs over the side because I'm afraid someone will grab me and like ahhhhh.

Gavin: Sometimes I get so creeped out that I put the blanket over my head and go ...

Adam: I know.

Gavin: I make a shield at the edge of my bed like I make my pillow a big shield and I just put one on the other side and I block all the light and also sometimes I feel like...

Noah: Someone's watching you... ahhhhh...

Gavin: No, um I was I was...

Adam: I'm afraid someone is going to come into my backyard at night and start...

Jessica: Gavin, what's your next question?

Noah: Can I just say one more thing? Well, sometimes I like to, well maybe two, sometimes, I think something's running by my window like...

Adam: Me, too.

Noah: Like a werewolf or something that's running right by my window.

Adam: And if I get out someone will have a knife and slice my face.

[“Winterton’s Spirit” Transcript, October 25, 2012]

Here, Adam and the two other boys in the group engaged in a pattern of talk in which it was acceptable for them to share fears. By the end of this week-long book club, Adam and the other boys readily admitted that they were “freaked out,” “scared,” and suggested they were “going to be scared when everything goes dark tonight” [“Winterton’s Spirit” Transcript, October, 25, 2012] While the discussion here seems to veer away from actual analysis of the text, these meetings gave the boys (and Jessica to some extent) an opportunity to admit that there were things that scared them, allowing them to bond over common fears. Rosenblatt (1938,1995) argues that opportunities to discuss texts provide an opportunity for readers to create self definitions that are in contrast to “others.” However, for Adam, the recognition that a group of students echoed his fears and anxieties seemed to be therapeutic, so much so that when Jessica redirected the the group to “stay on task” or to “stay on topic,” Adam argued, “We ARE, we’re talking about the story” [“Winterton’s Spirit” Transcript, October 25, 2012].

Sounder (Armstrong, 1968) also provided explicit opportunities to connect to characters' fears and anxieties. On many occasions, Adam took the opportunity to either connect the story to his own situation or empathy for a character (Dutro, 2008). For instance, in the following example, Adam and his group discussed a scene in which the main character's mother is encouraging him to live with a family who will be able to help him go to school. Adam re-read the excerpt in which the mother describes her illiteracy to her son, in an attempt to motivate him to learn to read.

Adam: (Reads the paragraph about people not being able to read in the cabin.) I find that funny, well, that's not why I picked this because it seemed sad that the mother didn't know that there were that many books in the world. That's kind of funny because she thinks that there's not that many books in the world.

Javier: Yeah, 'cause there are, like, nine million books.

Selina: There are more than nine million books in the world. [*Sounder* Transcript, November 9, 2012]

Unlike his connections during the readings of the scary stories, in this instance Adam's comment acted as a judgment of people who struggle with literacy. Interestingly, Javier is a student who historically struggled with reading. His reaction to Adam's response was an attempt to align with Adam by interpreting the use of the word "funny" to mean "to be laughed at," rather than as it was intended to be interpreted, as "unusual."

Although it was clear from Adam's hedging of his stance that it was not his intention to

make fun of the mother's understanding, his contribution allowed Javier the opportunity to demonstrate literate knowledge (Shiffrin, 1994).

In a similar episode, Adam responded to a scene in *Sounder* that describes the boy taking a cake to his father who has recently been locked up in jail for stealing a ham. The author describes in great detail how walking in the open with the cake makes the boy feel conspicuous and vulnerable. When he finally arrives at the jail, the guard first refuses to let him in and then takes the cake away. In an attempt to make sure no dangerous contraband was baked inside the cake, the guard cuts the cake into four pieces, destroying it in front of the boy's eyes. With his group, Adam worked to understand the purpose of such an act, initiating the conversation with the following comment:

Adam: I thought it was... cause it was mean for the man to ruin the cake that was for his father. [*Sounder* Transcript, November 13, 2012]

Again, as Adam evaluated the scene he used language that indicated unfavorable judgment of the guard's behavior. Unfortunately, this conversation took place just before lunch, leaving little time for other students to respond.

Offering Explanations

Similar to his participation in whole groups, in small groups Adam often took on the role of a person who could explain situations in texts by drawing on his background knowledge (Wiseman, 2011; Lysaker, 2006). For instance, if a student asked a question, expressed confusion, or displayed some level of misconception, Adam stepped in and did his best to provide information in a way that made the story more easily comprehended. In this way, Adam acted as a more knowledgeable other, stepping into the role of the

teacher (Vygotsky, 1978). Often, he drew on intertextual connections and scientific knowledge in support of his claims. As when he was in the whole group, these contributions were often based in emotional responses to text, but were delivered in uninflected tones. However, there were more instances during small groups when Adam's explanations were less emotionally based and focused more on facilitating his peers' comprehension of the story.

The following example demonstrates the way Adam took it upon himself to explain something to his small group. In this excerpt, Adam's group discussed a scene in *Sounder*, in which the family dog, Sounder, has been shot by a white sheriff after he (the dog) gets into an altercation with the father of the family. The chapter ends describing Sounder being grazed by a bullet and running off, but doesn't reveal if he lives or dies.

Selina: Do you think the dog will die?

Maria: No.

Adam: I don't think so, it seems like a story where, I don't think the dog will die, I think it's supposed to be like a hero story. [*Sounder* Transcript, November 5, 2012]

Here, Adam's use of an intertextual connection offers a window into his understanding of narrative complexities, and specifically the notion that in hero stories main characters don't die (Bruner, 1990; Sipe, 2008). As this conversation continued, students shared different opinions about the fate of Sounder, debating if he was already dead or not. Adam rejoined the conversation in order to restate and enact the story sequence so as to clear up the confusion for the group.

Javier: No, 'cause like it said that it said that.

Selina: They shot his ear off.

Javier: Yeah, but remember they had a wood.

Adam: It went down.

Javier: And then when they shot it, he went to go get it and there's
nothing on it, not a bullet. And it didn't go through.

Adam: He looked for it on the concrete to see if the bullet went through
the concrete, and it hadn't which means it's probably inside of
something. But also from what I heard, it went like down his
head, and—

Javier: Yeah, yeah.

Adam: And down and scraped off his side, and probably hit his ear
(demonstrates by quickly sweeping one hand over the other)
and—

Selina: And the ear got knocked off.

Adam: And then he probably pushed himself like that (demonstrates by
springing off of his knees) or no he pushed himself on his hind
legs.

Javier: And then it shot him like right here like whoosh (demonstrates by
imagining his hand as a bullet, swiping it past his hand past his
ear, leaning away from the hand acting like a bullet), like it almost
like...

Adam: Yeah.

Maria: It went like this, it went like half way (demonstrates by imagining her hand like a bullet, shows how the bullet would have only clipped half of the ear off of the dog).

Adam: ‘Cause the wagon was away he was running towards it to try to catch and the sheriff was running toward it so it probably just went like swoosh (demonstrates again, imitating his earlier action).

Javier: Probably it just went like... [*Sunder* Transcript, November 5, 2012]

Throughout this excerpt, Adam made declarative statements indicating that what he claimed should be considered true (Austin, 1962). His body acted as a tool that supported the claims he made, further implicating his understanding of the sequence of events as factual.

The following is similar in that Adam responded to another student’s misunderstanding by offering a logical, experience-based explanation. This segment was initiated after the group discussed a scene in which the story reveals that *Sunder* has taken refuge under the steps of the family’s front porch after being shot. The conversation began as Adam expressed amazement about *Sunder*’s ability to sleep in a confined space outside during the summer. When the other students joined in, it was apparent to Adam that they didn’t fully understand the reason for his inquiry and amazement, evident by Selina’s suggestion, so he explained further.

Adam: He still loves his dog. And how does his dog sleep under there?

Javier: I know.

Selina: I know, right?

Adam: Especially in the summer.

Selina: Maybe it's cooler under there because there was no air conditioning back then, and it's cooler in the shade than sitting in the sun.

Adam: And it's also a trapped area, it's not just shade, it's...

Selina: Yeah, you've got a point.

Javier: Yeah, it's not opened.

Selina: Yeah, but in the summer time, imagine sleeping in the trunk of your car. Like a big trunk. In my car, you can sit in the trunk, but um... [*Sounder* Transcript, November, 6, 2012]

Adam also used explanatory techniques to help other students comprehend fictitious scenarios. For instance, in the following example, Adam's first book club discussed a story in which the image of a mysterious figure walking down a flight of stairs in an old hotel is captured by a pair of ghost hunters. Jessica expresses confusion about how the picture-taking scenario occurred.

Jessica: If the one guy saw the details on the lady, why did the photographer, the photo just show a shape?

Noah: I get it, I get it, me, me, me.

Adam: I have an answer to that question, I guess.

Jessica: Okay.

Noah: But I was raising my hand.

Adam: Apparently, on cameras when you take a picture of a ghost, the ghost won't show. Like intervention or something.

Jessica: Maybe it was because it was vanishing and the whole body hadn't vanished yet.

Noah: That's what I was thinking.

Adam: Maybe it's because when the flash went off, it was so it was barely there.

Noah: I was thinking right as the flash went off it was almost gone but it wasn't totally gone yet.

Jessica: Maybe the powder from the flash like covered the lady so the lady so it's the flash maybe.

Gavin: But the powder would have gone through her. ["The Brown Lady" Transcript, October 24, 2012]

Here, the use "apparently" to start his contribution helped Adam's response appear to be based on some background knowledge that is fact-based (Searle, 1967). He went on to speculate and raise possibilities to answer Jessica's question. This example demonstrates the ways in which Adam drew on his perceived background knowledge in order to help others comprehend. Further, this example shows that small groups provided Adam with the opportunity to think into texts in ways that helped him question illogical scenarios and fill in gaps left by the author.

Presenting Arguments

In small groups, Adam was much more willing to express confusion, ask questions, and directly challenge other students' ideas, offering counter explanations. Across both book clubs, it was not uncommon for Adam to start contributions with, "that would be impossible," "I don't think so," or "I wonder why..." These contributions were usually in response to other students' questions or comments about the texts, and were generally followed by a deeper discussion. Thus, Adam's expression of puzzlements led to conversations in which students had opportunities to engage in argumentation and collaborative reasoning (Clark, Anderson, Kou, Kim, Archodidou, & Nguyen-Jahiel, 2003). If disagreements arose Adam was willing to engage in arguments, but felt less need to mediate the discussions.

In the following example, Adam's second book club had just read a section in *Sunder* that depicts the boy's father being chained up as he is taken to jail for allegedly stealing a ham. Adam expresses confusion, which sparks a debate among the group.

Adam: I'm trying to figure out why they chained up the dad, 'cause I think that they're a black family, because look, in that picture they are black.

Selina: They are slaves, Adam (sounding irritated).

Adam: No, they aren't.

Selina: Yes, they are. They work for a white man.

Adam: No, they don't.

Selina: Yes, Adam, they do.

Javier: (mocking Selina) Yes, Adam.

Maria: Do you think this was in the old times?

Selina: Yes, it is in the old times.

Adam: It's probably in the 30s. The 1930s. [*Sounder* Transcript,
November 12, 2012]

When Adam's initial question was met with an explanation he didn't see as plausible, he immediately countered but didn't provide any sort of counter-explanation (probably because of the aggressive way Selina engaged in this conversation, he may not have had time). However, when Maria asked a question, Adam's answer seemed to support his claim that the characters in the book cannot be slaves because it is occurring in the 1930s, after slavery was abolished. Later in the book club, when the group again argued about the time period in which the story was set, Adam did provide more information, arguing that because automatic cars were operational, the story must be set in the 1930s, thus the characters could not be slaves.

Adam was an active participant in both of his small groups. He used his prior knowledge and his familiarity with texts to help explain things to others. He also drew on connections in small groups as a way to show emotions and to relate to other group members. Further, Adam was willing to provide clarifying information when others had questions or if he perceived that misconceptions were afoot in the group.

Adam Across Contexts

Across the reading contexts, Adam's contributions to book conversations seemed important for himself and for his peers. Although his contributions appeared, on a surface

level, to be factual and to lack emotional connection, closer inspection indicated that Adam's contributions during read-alouds may have arisen from deep wellsprings of emotion and connection with the text. In some instances the story events and character problems Adam responded to were directly related to his personal concerns (Dutro, 2008; Rosenblatt, 1995). Thus, Adam's talk across groups functioned as a possibly necessary way for him to express concerns about his own life in a biblio-therapeutic sort of way.

For those who didn't know Adam on a personal level, these contributions seemed less about him personally and more about providing information to the group. Specifically, many of his contributions during read-alouds and small groups appeared to be explanatory in nature, either based on "facts" that he'd learned somewhere or on logically constructed arguments about events in the texts. These contributions acted as a way to share information that helped contextualize stories in ways that could potentially further comprehension for his peers.

While there were some similarities in the ways Adam participated across the reading contexts, there were also some important distinctions. Small groups seemed to provide Adam with a venue through which he was able to deviate from literal discussions of the text, so that he could explore more emotional connections. When I asked him about the differences he saw between small and large groups, he told me:

Adam: You can say things that are a little bit more off of what the conversation is.

Katie: I see.

Selina: And you can say questions and comments and connections, and...

Adam: Instead of just being, you can have a question but we have to guess that's all, and then we have to... and also, sometimes, you want to say something about it, but it matches the conversation you're having there on the carpet, but then what you have to do as a book club job doesn't really fit into that. So you can't really write about what you're thinking if it's kind of off of that. Off of what you're supposed to.

Javier: Even you could read independent or with a partner or with your whole group.

Katie: Adam, will you say that one more time, I don't know if I understood you, you said um, if you're writing a book club job it might not match what you're thinking?

Adam: No, if you're talking on the carpet, it might be they're talking about one particular thing that might not match the book club job and you have ideas for that, but then if you're doing your book club job those ideas don't really match fit into what you're writing. [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]

It seemed as though Adam felt that what he talked about on the carpet was limited by the agenda of the group, unlike in small groups where he had the freedom to explain and explore his thinking freely. This idea is supported by the different ways in which he participated. For instance, he seemed to feel more freedom expressing emotion and trying to relate to other members of his group when there were only a few people to

discuss with. However, it is likely that Adam responded emotionally to texts in large groups (as is evidenced by his response to the deeply personal issue of cancer), but portrays his response as fact-based rather than about his emotional connection.

For a student like Adam the presence of both contexts is important for his literate and emotional development. The small group gave him the opportunity to more deeply explore and play with themes in texts and allowed him the opportunity to step into different roles socially. As a student who suffers from anxiety, interacting with students was out of his comfort zone. The small group provided him the opportunity to take on the role of authority, possibly building his confidence as a respondent and contributor. Further, small groups provided space for Adam to explicitly explore emotions with other students, connecting them along a common bond.

Liam

Liam, a nine-year-old third grader, was in his first year in Ms. Sadowsky and Mrs. Mackendale's classroom. He was the only child of a university professor, whom he talked about often, and divided his time between his mother and father's homes. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky indicated that his father was very involved and interested in Liam's success both academically and socially [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. Students seemed to tolerate Liam when he participated in class activities, but he didn't appear to have many close friends. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky reported that they had noticed a pattern with Liam's relationships: he has friends for a few days and then they abandon him [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. Thus, it was typical to find Liam sitting alone in the classroom or drifting between social groups during free time.

Academically, Liam was considered to be an average student. He made "good" grades (As and Bs) and had been successful on standardized tests. Although he had shown improvement in his test scores since the beginning of the school year (scoring 53% in the fall and 73% in the spring on the state-mandated standardized test), Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky were not convinced that he performed at his full potential [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. They specifically stated they believed he rushed through work in order to do things that were more interesting to him. Both teachers considered Liam to be "a reader," and suggested that when he was interested in a topic, he would read about it for pleasure. During in-class Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) time, it was not uncommon to find Liam reading a Calvin and Hobbes comic book,

becoming so engulfed that he scarcely noticed his surroundings. In fact, he became annoyed when people (including teachers) interrupted his reading [Field Notes, October 8, 2012].

Outside of school, Liam participated in a martial arts program, although he never mentioned it during class [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. He also spent a significant amount of time learning about history; he took particular interest in studying World War II. His teachers tried to capitalize on these interests in ways that helped support sustained participation in academic tasks. For instance, the second book club Liam read *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 2011), a story about a Jewish family's struggles in escaping war-torn Nazi Germany, a topic Liam enjoyed reading about during his free time.

Case Selection: Liam

Liam was selected as a focal student because he was a highly active participant in the whole group setting (making 60 total contributions). His case highlights the ways in which his responses shaped conversations in a manner that added complexity and depth to discussions (Sipe, 2008). Across both whole group and small group settings, Liam's turns at talk could be categorized as giving information and introducing arguments. When he contributed to discussions, he appeared to want to be seen as an expert. Often, this resulted in him sharing information that he'd learned outside of the read-aloud or book club contexts. During conversations when Liam provided information, he drew on cited resources (e.g. television shows, things his parents had told him, books) that helped show how well-versed he was on the topic. These citations ranged from things he'd seen

on TV, books he'd read, information he'd gained from talking with his parents, to his life experiences. Showing his intelligence was important for Liam, as he seemed to thrive on being positioned as an expert among the group.

Liam also acted as an agitator in the group. His contributions often resulted in a collaborative meaning-making session in response to his ideas. These arguments seemed to result in speakers treating topics more critically that may have been missed had Liam not contributed. When Liam questioned the text, he shared and defended his predictions and ideas and the group dynamics shifted from a sharing model in which students might give a one-sentence response to a sharing model in which students argued for and defended different viewpoints. Further, students drew on critical thinking skills to build and defend their own arguments and viewpoints in response to Liam's critical contributions. Thus, Liam's signature response patterns proved important in engaging students in arguments in ways that may not have been available without his presence. However, Liam's participation style was not readily appreciated by other students; hence, at times he was positioned socially in relation to the ways in which he participate in group conversations about books. This positioning seemed to happen most often in the small group setting, where students didn't have the teacher to help mediate meaning making sessions. When Liam was denied opportunities to engage in his preferred way, he disengaged from conversations. Evidence from this overview is presented in the sections that follow.

Liam in the Whole Group

During whole group reading sessions, Liam chose to sit at the back of the carpet in a chair turned sideways, resting his back against the round table behind him. He preferred this spot in the room because the table could be used to store things, like his snack bowl and pencils. Although his physical position was removed from the rest of the class, Liam was a frequent contributor in the read-aloud setting, making 62 total contributions during the 22 read-aloud sessions. He raised his hand multiple times during each reading session, and seemed to want to hold the floor for as long as possible. When a teacher granted Liam the floor, it was common for him to begin his contributions with, “I have two things,” which was often followed by an extended (more than two sentences) period of talk—as though he didn’t want to be cut off early. During his turns at talk, his speech was more slow and deliberate than his usual pace. Further, his voice didn’t fall at the end of his voice units, indicating that he was choosing not to observe punctuation. When others tried to interrupt, Liam held the floor, raising his voice over other speakers, continuing on with his original line of thinking.

Liam’s contributions during read-alouds could be characterized as explanatory (introducing information) and as critical (analyzing elements of the text in divergent ways). His contributions seemed important for the building of his identity as someone who held a great deal of knowledge about many things. There was little variation to this approach across texts. For the group, Liam’s contributions were important because they sparked debate, which resulted in engaged, critical discussions about texts.

Acting as an Expert to Build Meaning

When Liam participated in the whole group setting, he often positioned himself as an expert regardless of the text being read aloud, which allowed him to assert power and gain authority in the whole group setting (Holland, Lachoicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). His contributions typically allowed him to demonstrate that he held knowledge about a topic such as the history of World War II. It was common for Liam to support the information he delivered by reporting experiences and citing sources that helped him be viewed as an authority on the subject. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky seemed to recognize the way Liam shared expertise was important to him; thus they made space for and supported this approach to response by expressing various forms of validation. For instance, in the following example, the class discussed a scene in *Sadako* (Coerr, 1997) in which the main character, Sadako, expresses excitement about participating in a race in memory of those who died as a result of World War II's bombings, but becomes worried when she feels dizzy after practicing for the event. For fear that she would not be allowed to participate in the race, Sadako withholds this information from her family and teachers. Mrs. Mackendale stopped reading to model empathetic analysis by exploring Sadako's emotions as she experienced this unfamiliar feeling. As soon as Mrs. Mackendale finished talking, Liam raised his hand to add information that further contextualized the story.

Mrs. Mackendale: That must have been very scary. Liam?

Liam: Maybe it's... I watched a show, and if you're a baby when the atomic bomb drops on you, sometimes

the effects can keep with you, so if you were old you could die from the atomic bomb, but if you were really young, you could get the effect when you were running, so maybe that is happening to her, and that sounds exactly like the effects of the atomic bomb.

Mrs. Mackendale: Interesting. Yeah, you know, typically with any type of sicknesses or things that are happening, the really, really young people, like babies, and the elderly are more susceptible, or more sensitive to get sick. So, I wonder if you are right, if the aftereffects of the atomic bomb affected her as a baby, and maybe now we're just seeing the effects of it. It's about 10 years later or so. [*Sadako* Transcript, December 10, 2012]

Here, Liam drew on an intertextual connection (“a show”) to make an associative link between the story and information he knew (Sipe, 2008). At the point in the text being discussed, the reader does not yet know that Sadako has cancer; thus, Liam’s intertextual link acts as a prediction for what might happen next. He ended his contribution with a declarative statement, using the powerful word “exactly” to reinforce the strength of his prediction, further implicating his knowledge as accurate. Mrs. Mackendale validated his contribution by affirming that it was “interesting,” which supported Liam’s effort to appear knowledgeable, possibly encouraging Liam to contribute in similar ways in the future.

The following is a similar example, in that Liam took the floor immediately after the teacher finished talking, and used another source as a way to make his contribution seem more credible. In this excerpt, the students had listened to *The Always Prayer Shawl* (Oberman, 1997). The following conversation occurred after Mrs. Mackendale finished reading a page that described how Jewish refugees had to walk for extended periods of time in order to escape persecution.

Liam: I have two connections. One is that my dad's girlfriend, her great-great grandfather, in the 1800s, fought in the first revolution, and he lost, and he had to walk, and he escaped from a jail cell, and he had to walk from Siberia all the way to France he had to walk that journey, and then he finally got to the US and her family has been living in Virginia.

Mrs. Mackendale: Wow, thank you for sharing that.

Mia: I have a question for Liam. Do you know how many miles he walked?

Liam: I do not know how many miles he walked, but Siberia is a cold part of Russia, it's like so cold that no one can ever escape, and he walked from there to France.

Mia: Wow.

Liam: He probably stopped in France. [*The Always Prayer Shawl* Transcript, December 17, 2012]

This excerpt demonstrates two features of Liam's contributions during whole groups. First, he announced his presence in the conversation by establishing the amount of time he would spend talking ("I have two connections.") thus taking an authority position within the group. Compared to other students' turns at talk, this was an extended and lengthy contribution. Second, he drew another intertextual link between his knowledge and the story. He cited the source of the information that was to follow (his dad's girlfriend) in order to make the information he was sharing appear more relevant and accurate. Unlike the example above, Liam's link here seemed an attempt at personalizing the story as well as adding information that might help contextualize events for other students (Sipe, 2008)

This example also shows the ways in which the whole group acted as an interpretive community in which spaces were opened for students to take on roles as clarifiers and scaffolders (Sipe, 2008). In this example, Mia entered the conversation by way of asking Liam to extend his contribution. This participation style dually supported the deepening of comprehension of the narrative being constructed both by the text and by Liam, as well reinforcing Liam's identity as an expert on his topic and providing him with the space to continue talking.

The interactive read-aloud structure that Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky created allowed Liam to explore his thinking and contribute in ways that connected to his own personal background, allowing him to make complex connections to texts that

resulted in higher-level understandings (Wiseman, 2011). For example, when Liam contributed to *The Always Prayer Shawl* conversation, he shared a family story that made explicit the discomfort the characters might have felt during their long walks to sanctuaries. His identity as an expert was both historically situated and constructed through each interaction he had with classmates (Holland, Lachocotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Further, his interactions with his teachers and classmates went unchallenged which appears to have validated his contributions as relevant. Thus, the interactive read-aloud context seems to have provided Liam with opportunities to “author” himself as a particular kind of respondent as he drew on signature approaches to discussions (Holland, Lachoitte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998).

The conversation excerpts above also illustrate the ways in which interactive read-alouds foster a positive and accepting classroom environment (Wiseman, 2011). Each of Liam’s efforts to contribute to conversations were validated either by the teachers or another student. Specifically, Mrs. Mackendale accepted his response as “interesting,” and Mia asked him a question that extended his contribution. This authorization seemed to facilitate the development of a particular response pattern in which Liam shared information that signified what he found important about texts. Thus, Liam was permitted opportunities to construct his identity as an expert through positive social interactions centering on his offered explanations in the whole group setting, which seemed satisfying (Gee, 1999; 2004; Lewis, 2001; Maloch, 2005).

Offering Criticism

Liam's also contributed to read-alouds by offering analytical criticisms of texts and other students' ideas. He consistently analyzed text sequences and story lines, arguing issues of relevance and accuracy. Liam's criticisms were often made in relation to some indeterminacy or inaccuracy in texts that resulted in characters engaging in impossible scenarios. It was common during these episodes for other discussants to join into conversation in equally critical ways, engaging in chains of speculative reasoning (Sipe, 2008). When challenged, Liam tended to defend his original position by providing more evidence that his interpretation was correct, without considering alternate viewpoints. It became evident that his unwillingness to accept others' viewpoints seemed to be an attempt at maintaining his position as an expert. However, the defense of his ideas demonstrated that Liam could successfully construct and defend an argument (Reznitskaya & Anderson, 2009), as well as illustrated Liam's deep understanding of narrative structures, calling into question when plot sequences didn't fit the expectations of particular genres (Bruner, 1990).

Liam's critical contributions were important because they appeared to instigate collaborative meaning-making sessions in which students supported their ideas with additional reasoning. Rezniskaya and Anderson (2009) argue that the opportunity to engage in collaborative argumentation exposes children to the social features of arguments (e.g. reasons, grounds, warrants, backing, modifiers, counterarguments, and rebuttals), which may later become internalized as procedural approaches to texts. The researchers argue that the acquisition of an epistemological orientation towards

arguments orient children toward developing commitments to use reasoned discourse for exploring complex issues. Further, Reznitskaya and Anderson (2009) contend that students adept in argumentation strategies are more likely to generate relevant propositions, consider alternatives, and reconcile opposing perspectives. Thus, Liam's role as critic in the large group facilitated other children's moves beyond simplified interpretations of texts and seemed to help them consider multiple and varied approaches to interpretation. The following set of excerpts exemplifies Liam's critical approaches to texts, highlighting the ways in which his contributions facilitated collaborative meaning-making sessions.

The following talk was generated at the conclusion of a read-aloud about a ghost who haunts the beach, searching for a hook-hand he'd lost at the time of his burial. This example highlights the pattern of talk Liam used to initiate the conversation by challenging a text, which sparked a critical conversation in which children considered the value and truth of the text. As the story came to a close, Liam leaned forward with a straight spine, rigid elbow, and his gaze locked on the student teacher, Ms. Ramirez, to expose a flaw in the plotline:

Liam: This could happen, maybe, some people, what I think, there are two things. What I think is that this story doesn't really make sense because gold is pretty heavy, right? The waves would push it all in, it would be stuck somewhere down there, so people would have to be living there for so long, why hadn't someone just gone fishing and fished it up? That would have been totally

likely. And also it would only be, like let's say this would be the waves, this would be the beach (modeling with his hands), it would only be like right here, or right here, and the waves, over time, it *would have either gone down*, and people would have hooked it up, or the waves would have pushed it up, so I don't see how he could have lost it for that much time, without someone finding it. 'Cause if it were just right there someone would see it and they would grab it, and then take it back to the house, then take it to the burial...

Ms. Ramirez: Very interesting.

Liam: ...but someone would fish it, but it's been there so, more than 100 years, why didn't someone see it and pick it up, or go fish it and have it?

Student: Because it's at the bottom of the sea.

Ms. Ramirez: That's a good question....

Liam: If it were at the bottom of the sea, it would have gone there slowly, a century, I'd say in about, estimating about a century and three years or something, it would have just gone down, the waves would have just pushed it down, let's say that this is the sea level, and this was the bottom, like right here or something (demonstrating with his hands), I don't see how somebody couldn't have just gone, just walking randomly, oh what's that

shiny thing, and picked it up, and then took it to the burial. [By
Hook or by Crook Transcript, October 25, 2012]

Liam initially couched his contribution as a tentative suggestion (this could happen), which he quickly changed into an evaluation of the plot (the story doesn't really make sense). His words challenged the credibility of an essential detail that undermined the plot structure. Here, he demonstrated understanding that his criticism of the text required supported analysis; thus, he drew on understanding of how waves carry objects out to sea as well as the rise and fall of sea levels to make a case about the implausibility of the story (Reznitskaya & Anderson, 2009). He maintained the floor for several turns, reiterating his points, seeming to recognize that his criticism may be met by equally critical analysis and that his point may not be understood. In fact, as this conversation continued, other students collaborated or challenged Liam's analysis, resulting in an argument that spoke back to Liam's ideas.

Jessica: The waves probably moved it...(inaudible).

Liam: Gold is heavy, so it wouldn't necessarily budge.

Ms. Ramirez: I know, so it would sink down to the bottom is what you're saying.

Liam: It would sink down a little bit, but then there's solid rocks, and it would probably get caught, then the waves would come back, and somebody would have seen it, the glitter of it, and picked it up.

Ms. Ramirez: Yes, I hear what you're saying. That's a really good observation Liam. You really read into how that worked. Jason?

Jason: Well, I just have an explanation for that. One thing, I don't think that someone would have that much money to buy a real gold hook. Two, even if it were gold, the sand would have just covered it, and it would sink way down.

Ms. Ramirez: Ok, that's really interesting. I wonder if the captain was looking in the right place? Noah?

Noah: If someone did find it, I think they would be too scared to visit the house, because his ghost would be there.

Ms. Ramirez: Yeah, I wonder if someone had it, would the captain haunt him or her? Melissa?

Melissa: This is kinda another explanation for Liam's comment. I think, because you think they would find it, because they would see it, I think it would sink to the bottom after 25 years like that.

Liam: I know, but if it were real gold—

Student: It wasn't real gold.

Liam: I know, but if it sunk to the bottom—

Ms. Ramirez: Hey Liam, I'm going to interrupt you, everyone

understands what Liam's point is, he's wondering why no one has found it, we've discussed that. Jackson? Adam?

Adam: If the hook were actually real gold it probably wouldn't be able to wash into the sand unless the waves were really strong, and if it were just painted gold, the paint would have just washed off by now. So they wouldn't really know.

Ms. Ramirez: Yeah, so maybe they didn't know. Alex?

Alex: I have another reason why the hook may go further out to sea, or two. It would have to be hollow so you can stick the hand in there, so it wouldn't be that heavy. And two, it would depend on which way it fell. If it fell with the hollow side down it would float, even if it were real gold, because the air in there could be displaced by the water below. [*By Hook or by Crook* Transcript, October 25, 2012]

Unlike the Sadako example, the claims Liam made here were not supported by another source of information (though he drew on his own background). Thus, presenting this argument initiated a collaborative reasoning session in which students worked to see if they could make any scientific sense out of the plot. Indeed, other students presented alternative possibilities that both supported and countered Liam's justification for being

dissatisfied. The linked chain of hypothesis resulting from Liam's initial analytic evaluation demonstrates the amount of interpretive energy students spent in attempting to come to shared understandings of texts (Sipe, 2008).

As this conversation wore on, it became evident that students became frustrated (rolling eyes, slouched posture, raised voices) with Liam's unwillingness to consider others' ideas, as many of them were seen rolling their eyes around and let out audible sighs. However, his contribution was important because it sparked a critical, thoughtful discussion of an essential detail of the plot, resulting in the group drawing on their own critical thinking skills to collaboratively problem solve. Further, this episode lasted a total of 6 minutes and 27 seconds and engaged nine total students, many of whom rarely spoke during whole group sessions (e.g., Adam). Reznitskaya and Anderson (2009) (among others) have shown that opportunities for students to orally engage in collaborative meaning-making sessions and arguments like the ones above translate into other contexts in which logical reasoning is valued. Thus, Liam's introduction of arguments here was important in that he provided a venue in which individual students might become more proficient in formulating and presenting arguments.

Liam also offered criticism in the form of evaluating character behavior or making suggestions about what might have made for a better story. For instance, the following example came from an episode in which the class discussed a scene in *Chocolate Fever* (Smith, 1972) in which the main character, Henry, has run away from home because he feels he has become a burden to his family. Ms. Sadowsky stopped at a point in the text that describes Henry's internal plan about how he will survive his first

night away from home. The author describes Henry's fears about not being able to find food or a safe place to sleep, allowing Ms. Sadowsky to step in and express worry about Henry. Liam entered the conversation not to echo or predict as many other students did. Rather, Liam responded to Ms. Sadowsky's suggestion of worry by providing a scenario that might lead to Henry's safety:

Ms. Sadowsky: Yeah, I'm really worried about that, too. Jackson was saying that he's got to go somewhere that he knows someone to get some food, and something to drink. How would you get that? Mia?

Mia: I think that he just went to school to get something that he left there.

Ms. Sadowsky: Ok, maybe. Maybe he left his snack under the bridge. Liam?

Liam: A good idea that he could do, is he could probably stay there for a few days, it's very easy. All you have to do is go into a store, and hide there until they lock up at night, and steal things, eat it, and then when they walk back in hide again, and then you can just eat there.

[Transcript of *Chocolate Fever* Read-Aloud, September 21, 2012].

Liam drew on a personalizing impulse in this example, drawing the story world out into his own (Sipe, 2008). He viewed Henry's situation from an objective, third person

observer position (Langer, 1990) in which he creatively altered the story, giving Henry a solution that might solve his homelessness. Sipe argues that this type of personal response acts as the basis for more developed and sophisticated literary understandings in which readers consider the implications texts have for their own lives. Liam posed possible solutions to Henry's problem; thus demonstrating an initial understanding that the story world is negotiable. He positioned himself as a capable, and perhaps more adept author, as he suggested a solution to a problem highlighted by the actual composer of the story. This contribution also seemed to act as a tentative prediction in that Liam's idea that his solution is something that Henry "could do."

As the conversation continued, Ms. Sadowsky honored Liam's powerful meaning-making, and tried to make it even stronger and more logical by providing both challenge and time. Thus, here in the presence of the whole group, Mrs. Sadowsky provided Liam with the opportunity and space to continue to think and build his argument, which satisfied the identity position he took up in the read-aloud context.

Ms. Sadowsky: I would imagine that you might set off some alarms, because most stores have alarms, but I guess it would be possible.

Liam: But if they go overnight, they don't detect them.

Ms. Sadowsky: Yeah, but they have an alarm on inside the school.

Liam: Yeah, but they have an alarm for someone to come in.

Ms. Sadowsky: They have motion detectors inside. I'll give you an example of what I'm talking about. Inside of

Meadowbrook, if you come in on the weekend, there's an alarm on the school, so it will go off if you come into the building. You have to turn the alarm off. If you are inside the building, like if I'm in this classroom, and someone set the alarm out front because they think everyone's gone, and I'm walking around, I'll set the alarm off. It's the motion detectors. The alarm can sense movement, so it will still trigger the alarm, even though I didn't open an outside door, I could just be walking around in the classroom.

Liam: But, if he walks around before the alarm, and finds the alarm, and turns it off, and then he could run up and do it, and he'd be like, oh, false alarm.

Ms. Sadowsky: Sure, could be, I guess you never know, anything is possible. Ok, we need to continue on chapter 7

[Transcript of *Chocolate Fever*, September 21, 2012].

Ms. Sadowsky made space for Liam to develop and construct an argument. She played the role of an opponent, modeling the social features of arguments and providing background knowledge that might dually inform Liam's argument and support her position. Indeed, as Liam encountered and processed the information Ms. Sadowsky shared, he changed his argument to accommodate his growing schema of the inner workings of security systems. This transaction between Ms. Sadowsky, Liam, and the

text modeled the ways in which texts act as malleable narratives that are subject to re-authoring (Sipe, 2008). Further, Ms. Sadowsky took this opportunity to model the ways in which discussants engage in productive discussions by supporting arguments, providing the class opportunities to add to their conversational repertoires (Lysaker, 2006).

Although this participation style did seem to frustrate other participants at times, Liam's role as a critic was important because it sparked collaborative reasoning that caused students and teachers to think in divergent ways. For instance, in the example from the ghost story above, Liam's commitment to having others agree with his assessment of the story introduced an argument that caused other students to draw on their own reasoning skills (e.g. providing counterclaims with supporting evidence). Similarly, in the example from *Chocolate Fever*, Liam's argument created an opportunity for Ms. Sadowsky to model an argumentation style that was not typical of the read-aloud setting. As she made claims that challenged Liam's idea, she offered specific evidence that supported her assertion. Liam's contributions here added a layer of complexity to discussions that resulted in extended collaborative meaning-making episodes as well as exercise skills in argumentation.

By allowing space for students to respond to text by drawing on their own lives and conceptual understandings, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky created an environment in which students were allowed to experience various approaches to response, which supported and extended their reading development (Lysaker, 2006; Panteleo, 2007; Wiseman, 2011). Throughout the read-alouds, Liam was validated as

someone who held a lot of knowledge about events in stories; thus, providing him the opportunity to author himself as a critical expert, a position that was satisfying to him. This continued support encouraged Liam to continue to contribute in ways that engaged other students in constructing meaning in response to texts. Thus, through conversations, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky encouraged Liam to build his knowledge and interpretations of texts in ways that were meaningful to him, which ultimately resulted other students being provided opportunities to engage with texts in new and transformative ways.

Liam In Small Groups

Liam was an active participant in both small groups (scary story literature circle and book club). Similar to his participation in the whole group discussions, Liam's contributions were provocative, often resulting in other students talking critically about elements of the story. He also maintained his role as a person who facilitated comprehension by providing vital background information. Hence, Liam's responses during small group sessions seemed to echo his participation in the whole group, though the lack of support from teacher participants seemed to result in less productive meaning-making sessions.

Liam's first literature circle comprised Kelly, Carla, and Zachary. They typically chose to discuss the readings at Liam's table in the classroom, and were functional in terms of their willingness to maintain focus when discussing the stories. However, when the conversation did shift from the reading, Kelly took on the role of the "teacher" in the group, redirecting and facilitating "on task" behavior. Liam's second book club met for

two weeks in November to discuss *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 2011). The other members of the book club were Ryan, Audrey, and Carter. This group typically met on the carpet at the front of Ms. Sadowsky's side of the room.

Sharing Expertise in the Small Group

Similar to his participation in the whole group, it was common for Liam to take on the role of expert in small group settings. When his group members asked questions about the text, Liam was typically the first to respond, and found a way to provide relevant information. During these episodes, Liam spoke with authority, often reinforcing his points by attributing his knowledge to external references. For instance, the following example was generated during his first book when the group discussed a story about a pair of ghost hunters who tried to capture the image of a female spirit who haunted a popular hotel. The story takes place in England, a location that Liam felt he knew a lot about because his mother had spent time living in the United Kingdom [Field Notes October, 1, 2012]. This talk was initiated when Carla expressed confusion about the photographers' motivation to take a picture of the ghost. Liam joined the conversation in an attempt to clear up Carla's confusion, but extended his contribution by adding extra information related to the topic.

Carla: It was really, really confusing, cause uh, I was like why would he want to do that.

Liam: Carla, the reason is that in England, I should know this cause my mom told me since she lived in England. She told me that a lot of people were crazy back in a few day, back in a few day, back in the

17 and 18 centuries, people were all like cuckoo (Carla giggles) they would always be like, there's a ghost, so they would always try to find ghosts and stuff, but the reason they shot it was because they knew about ghosts back then but they thought they could be killed, but they couldn't, a bunch of them tried to shoot ghosts with guns and stuff, and there was also a guy a few years ago, who found a ghost a ghost, he found Bloody Mary and he tried to kill her with a machine gun and guess what happened?

Carla: What?

Liam: He ended up killing two innocent people in the road. Like he was aiming at Bloody Mary, and Bloody Mary was like flying out the window like ahahaha (makes a noise that sounds like a ghost), and he shot and the bullet went right through her, and it shattered the window glass, and one bullet shattered the window glass, which caused one person to crash into another person. Then there was a fire, which killed a bunch of people. Cool.

Carla: So why were those people crazy?

Kelly: Okay.

Liam: Because they believe in ghosts, but they thought they could kill it, so they'd make crazy attempts to try to kill it, with guns and um every time they tried to kill it they kill innocent people. (Ms. Sadowsky walks up.) I'll tell you the story, Ms. Sadowksy. I've

already told these people, there was this guy determined ... (repeats the story) [*The Brown Lady* Transcript, October 24, 2012].

In this example, Liam drew on an intertextual connection as a way of helping Carla come to a more complete understanding of the story. He began his contribution by suggesting there was one reason for people to chase ghosts, and that he was going to share “the reason.” Then, he seized the opportunity to position himself as an expert, by suggesting that he “should have” insider knowledge about this topic because his mom lived in the place in which the story was set. These referential links helped Liam present the information as relevant and accurate; thus, promoting his status as an expert among the group (Searl, 1962). His explanation subsequently launched into a connected narrative that ostensibly addressed Carla’s question by blurring the lines between the ghost story and intertextual connection he shared.

In Liam’s first book club, his status as an expert was validated and his contributions remained productive. Carla, Zachary, and Kelly encouraged him to share, allowing him to take the floor more often than other students: 22 turns versus an average of 14 turns for others. However, the members of Liam’s second book club seemed less willing to accept him as an expert. In this group, it was common for Liam to have to compete with a Jewish classmate, Ryan, for the floor, because Ryan was often positioned as more knowledgeable about the experience of Jewish families during World War II. Liam seemed to become frustrated at times, because he read about World War II extensively and considered himself an expert. On many occasions, Liam and Ryan engaged in a power struggle over who would be allowed to hold the floor to provide

information or answer questions. This often resulted in Ryan and Liam talking over one another until Audrey stepped in to regulate their behavior. In all cases, Audrey positioned Ryan as having more knowledge than Liam, eventually resulting in Liam disengaging.

The following excerpt illustrates one instance in which Liam and Ryan engaged in a power struggle as Liam attempted to provide information to the group. Much like the example above, this conversation began when a student (Audrey) asked a question about something in the story and Liam attempted to answer. In this case, the group had read a passage in *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989) in which Annemarie, the main character, contemplated wearing a Jewish symbol that would identify her to Nazi troops that were hunting for people to take to concentration camps.

Audrey: What is the Star of David?

Liam: The Star of David is...

Audrey: Wait – he’s Jewish, he can tell us.

Ryan: Liam, hand me the pencil.

Liam: Does it look like this? Like a triangle? (drawing a Star of David)

Ryan: Like a triangle and another triangle. It’s like this.

Liam: It’s like a Jewish symbol.

Ryan: (drawing) It’s one triangle and then another. It has six points.

[*Number the Stars* Transcript, November 7, 2012].

Here, the group worked together to answer a question that was not imposed by an adult. In this example, Liam attempted to take the floor first, but Audrey overtly positioned Ryan as a person who held more knowledge than Liam about this particular subject. Liam attempted to rejoin the conversation by asking questions in ways that provided information related to the initial inquiry (“Does it look like this? Like a triangle?”). Here, Liam acknowledged Ryan’s expertise by conceding the floor momentarily; however, he maintained the pattern in which he provided information, thus claiming status as an expert. Over the two weeks this group met, the group’s pattern of positioning Ryan over Liam repeated. In their next meeting, Audrey asks another question related to the story setting, and similarly silenced Liam in order to give the floor to Ryan.

Audrey: What’s the Holocaust?

Ryan: The Holocaust was...

Liam: The Holocaust was... (loudly speaking over Ryan)

Ryan: Let me explain.

Audrey: Liam, put this down and let him explain.

Liam: Ryan. (signaling release of the floor)

Ryan: The Holocaust was during World War II, Hitler hated Jews where he had this thing for the whole war so what he did was he sent out all his soldiers, to get all the Jews and they would take them to these concentration camps and that’s where they would torture them.

Liam: ...That's where they would, he would also, there was also like kid Jews. In this book they are hiding a Jew. And they use to have these Nazis...

Audrey: Okay, well...

Liam: ...And they would send them to concentration camps and also go into their houses and just shoot them.

Audrey: Okay, now continue (to Ryan).

Ryan: Okay, so during the Holocaust, to identify the Jews for the Nazi soldiers, they had to wear the Star of David, and it was yellow and it said Jew, that's the Dutch word for Jew, Jud. It's actually spelled Jude. [*Number the Stars* Transcript, November 7, 2012]

In this excerpt, Liam attempted to get the floor first by raising his voice and speaking over the other group members. Liam conceded, allowing Ryan to talk; however, he took the opportunity to add information as soon as there was an opening, and tried again to position himself as holding a special kind of knowledge by citing "this book." When he finished speaking, Audrey almost dismissively turned to Ryan, giving him back the floor. Unlike the whole group setting and the first book club, Liam's attempts at adding relevant information went unvalidated.

Without the presence of a teacher to guide and facilitate participation structures, Liam's role in the group began to turn less productive (Lewis, 2001). Specifically, when Liam's attempts at explaining were questioned by the other group members, he reacted by disengaging from the conversation. When his attempts at joining the conversation

were not welcomed by other group members, it was common for Liam to say and do inappropriate things (e.g. roll around on the floor, singing and flicking his pencil) in order to draw attention away from the discussion. For instance, in the following example Audrey directly questions Liam's authority when he attempts to position himself as knowledgeable. Just before this exchange occurred, the group read a scene in which Nazi soldiers found a piece of clothing from Annemarie and her family that was being used to help scent-tracking dogs find the family.

Audrey: How do they make the handkerchiefs that the dogs smelled?

Ryan: I bet they put the chemical inside...

Audrey: Yeah, but I'm asking what the chemical is.

Liam: The chemical is this stuff called hydrodoxin (sic), it's like this very rare chemical that people like put into stuff, and—

Audrey: Why are you pretending you know about that? [*Number the Stars* Transcript, November 13, 2012]

In this episode Audrey directly challenged Liam's attempt to position himself as holding specific knowledge that might answer her question. She seemed to recognize that the information Liam was about to share was not useful; however, in addition to disputing its contents, she asked the reason for sharing it. Audrey seemed to understand that contributions should have purpose and intent even when the teacher isn't present, and understood Liam's attempt at joining the conversation as frivolous. Being challenged in ways that uncovered inconsistencies in what Liam proclaimed to know was frustrating to Liam, as after Audrey spoke, Liam's face flushed and he didn't respond [Field Notes,

November 13, 2012]. Through the rest of this discussion and the duration of this book club Liam's participation in the small group was different. Instead of trying to jump in and explain things, his contributions were more distracting and disengaged in nature. In the last few book club meetings, it was common to find Liam rolling around on the floor, falling out of his chair, making machine gun noises, making inappropriate comments and laughing randomly as others shared.

The success of Liam's participation in small group was, at least in part, dependent upon the social composition of the group (Bahktin, 1981; Lewis, 2001; McCarthy, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). The first group seemed to flow more like whole group sessions, in which Liam's contributions were accepted into the interpretive community in ways that allowed him to maintain his identity position as an expert. Thus, he remained a productive participant. However, the members of the second group didn't privilege Liam's voice; rather, they gave Ryan priority in providing input. Liam's attempts at joining the second group weren't supported, resulting in a lack of engagement and decrease in productivity.

Extending Narratives By Asking Others to Objectify Textual Episodes

Another role Liam took on during the small group was that of a person who asked provocative questions. Much like his critical approaches to texts during whole group sessions, Liam used these questions to help extend and connect narratives to the real world, causing students to discuss and think about things they might not have previously. At times, these questions were disturbing to the group, resulting in highly emotional reactions. For instance, in the following example, Liam asked a question that called his

group members to imagine themselves in a situation that was ethically complex. Just before he asked the question, the group had read a passage describing soldiers in Nazi Germany entering a Jewish family's house to look for clues about their current location, not realizing that they were hiding, undetected, in the home being searched. The author depicted Nazi soldiers as individuals who had no choice in deciding how they proceeded, but as people who follow orders directly.

Liam: If you were the soldiers, would you search Ann Marie's (sic) house?

Audrey: No because I would have no, absolutely no idea what to look for.

Ryan: I'd check because I was ordered.

Alice: And besides, anyway, it just looked like there was nobody there.

Liam: What would you [do] if you found them?

Ryan: If I were a soldier?

Liam: Yeah. Would you kill them?

Ryan: I'd take them to a concentration camp? Just take them to a concentration camp. [*Number the Stars* Transcript, November 6, 2012]

Liam initiated this conversation with a broad but complicated question, asking students place themselves directly into the center of a moral and ethical dilemma in the text. This question dually prompted students to objectify the experiences of the book's adversaries, a position not often considered in either whole group or small group settings. Likely,

Liam's background knowledge of the events of World War II resulted in focused attention on these pivotal characters who held the potential to change the course of the story entirely. Further, this probe asked students to step in and change the story in ways that might have held implications for the historical outcomes of the events of World War II, about which Liam held extent knowledge. Sipe (2000; 2008) among others (e.g. Greene, 2005; Langer, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1995; 1938) argues that objective but transparent responses demonstrate the complexity involved in reconciling the implications texts might have on students' lives or conceptions of the human condition.

Liam's initial question was met by Audrey who resisted the characterization and Ryan, who offered answers closely guided by the characterization of the Nazi soldiers as mindless followers of the Nazi mission, despite his identity as a Jewish student. Thus, he continued to dig into the moral and ethical dilemmas associated with being a soldier: killing people because of their religious affiliations and obeying orders as a member of the military. Ryan distanced himself from Liam's question by clarifying that he'd answered from the perspective of a soldier, not from his own moral and ethical position. Perhaps Ryan's need to make clear that he was playing a role in saying that he would take the characters to a concentration camp was related to his status as Jewish. This example illustrates how Liam's provocative questions enabled the other students to place themselves in the circumstances of characters, including those who were not main characters or heroes. These instances added complexity to the story discussions by asking students to analyze crucial moments in the text from multiple viewpoints (Sipe, 2008).

The following is a similar example in which Liam asked the small group to consider if suicide would be an option had they been a Jewish person captured by the Nazi regime. Again, Liam called students consider responses that extended beyond basic comprehension, by asking them to reconcile quality of life issues as they related to the description of treatment of people admitted into concentration camps. Just before this question, the Jewish protagonists were being closed in upon by soldiers. Liam took the opportunity to imagine them being caught, creating the space for the group to ponder options.

Liam: If you knew the soldiers were coming, would you commit suicide?

Audrey: NO!

Ryan: No.

Audrey: I never would commit suicide.

Liam: I mean, like, shoot yourself.

Audrey: I know what suicide is, and I would never do it.

Ryan: But if you did commit suicide, and it ended up being someone else ended up being in the place you were got caught, I guess yeah, is there a better choice?

Liam: It's a bad choice is getting captured and your friends knowing that you died in a concentration camp and it's really sad if you shot yourself [*Number the Stars* Transcript, November 5, 2012]

In this example, Liam engaged the group in critically considering how quality of life might be affected if they were forced to live under the horrific conditions of concentration camps described by the author. Audrey answered with a very quick and deliberate tone, almost sounding shocked or offended by the nature of the question. Ryan joined the conversation initially echoing Audrey's assertion that suicide might not be an option, but then began to explore the complicated nature of the situation. Thus, Ryan took the opportunity to critically think about what Liam was asking, specifically drawing attention to the notion that dying in a concentration camp might be worse than suicide.

In small groups, Liam drew on his knowledge of the world to help qualify his explanations and built alignment with other students as he supported claims he made. He also acted as a participant who posed provocative questions that called students to question moral and ethical issues in relation to texts. In instances in which he was positioned as less of an expert than another group member, he disengaged with the content or disrupted the group through inappropriate behavior. Liam didn't resort to such measures in the whole group because his ideas were responded to in positive and validating ways. It seems as though Liam's meaning-making ability was limited in the small group because other group members denied him opportunities to participate in ways that were satisfying.

In addition to providing information in small groups, Liam acted as a person who hoped to complicate narratives in ways that made students think about moral and ethical dilemmas. He responded to narratives in personal ways, asking "what would you do" style questions that called for objectification of narrative elements allowing him and

others to consider the implications stories had for their lives. Upon receiving answers to his questions, Liam probed the responses in ways similar to the ways in which his teachers did in the whole group setting. These probes seemed to result in students considering scenarios from different points of view and specifically through the eyes of the characters.

Liam Across Groups

Although he was a controversial participant in both whole and small groups, Liam's contributions demonstrated advanced literary understandings, extracting textual scenarios in ways that allowed him to consider the implications the story world had for his own life. Although some of his classmates seemed frustrated with him, Liam's contributions in both contexts were important. The ways in which he questioned texts added complexity to the conversations, drawing students' attention to various features of text. In both contexts, Liam asked his classmates to consider moral and ethical dilemmas in ways that extended the story, calling students to consider the possibility that the story world could happen in their own lives. Further, by responding critically to texts, Liam acted in a way that communicated a desire to "think about this," and added complexity to conversations (Clark, Anderson, Kuo, Kim, Archodidou, & Nguyen-Jahiel, 2003; Reznitskaya & Anderson, 2009; Rogoff, 1995). Though his style made students in both contexts uncomfortable, the questions were important in that they acted as a catalyst that moved individual and collective thinking beyond basic comprehension of story. In the whole group setting, this approach seemed to be welcomed and valid, as it was supported by both teachers and other students. When asked about his contributions, Ms. Sadowsky

suggested that, “He does like to argue, but his contributions invite students to have conversations they may not have previously had” [Teacher Interview, April 28, 2013]. However, in small group settings, students didn’t recognize the value in this type of engagement, resulting in them avoiding interacting with Liam in reading and social contexts.

Sociocultural theorists have long suggested that group composition affects the ways in which students interact within collaborative settings (Gee, 1999, 2004; Lewis, 2001; Maloch, 2005). Lewis (2001) argued that students with more social status in class tend to dominate conversations, marginalizing the voices of students who are less vocal, resulting in them missing out on the benefits of discussion. In Liam’s case, it was not his wish to speak that denied him access to discussions; rather, it was because the position he assigned himself was that of a critical expert, which seemed to annoy some of his classmates. When students confronted Liam by directly calling his expertise into question, he acted out in ways that indicated disengagement. His participation in the second small group with Audrey demonstrated the ways in which his potential for productive contributions was diminished when his ideas weren’t validated or were challenged in ways that didn’t allow for arguments to form. Thus, Liam and the group members from his second book club appear to have missed out on the benefits of Liam’s critical and provocative contributions.

Anna

Anna, a fourth grade Latina girl, had completed both second and third grades with Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky. She lived at home with both of her parents, and had a younger sister whom she talked about often. Outside school, Anna was active in gymnastics, practicing up to 17 hours per week [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. She also enjoyed reading in her spare time, citing *The Hunger Games* and *Among the Hidden* as her favorites [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012].

Anna was considered to be academically successful. She was typically placed in reading groups with other proficient readers and was thought of as a reflective contributor in group discussions [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. She received high grades (mostly As), and had historically been successful on her standardized tests. However, this year, unlike previous years, her teachers expressed concern about the amount of time she spent doing extracurricular activities, suggesting it had affected her performance in school [Interview, February 28, 2013]. They specifically suggested that her attention to homework and her in-class energy level seemed reduced when compared to previous years.

Anna was also thought of as successful socially in class. She was an active member of class activities and seemed to be well liked by her peers. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky told me that she didn't seem to have one group of friends; instead, she collaborated in play and work happily and successfully with almost everyone [Teacher Interview, January 15, 2013]. Anna's presence in the class was described as "someone who always tries to make others happy," or as someone who "doesn't like to be

disagreeable” [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. This positive, collaborative orientation was obvious through observations of Anna, as she consistently found ways to relate to others, avoiding arguments and communicating her willingness to work with others. Further, it was common for Anna to support others in discussions by reaffirming or adding on to their ideas in constructive ways.

Case Selection: Anna

Anna was chosen as a focal student because she was a moderately active participant in the whole group setting. Her case illustrates the ways in which participation in multiple contexts was mediated by contextual factors such as group composition (Vygotsky, 1978). Anna seemed to understand the tacit rules associated with the social contexts in which she participated, which appears to have influenced the ways in which she crafted and presented her responses. For instance, when Anna transitioned from the whole group to the small group context, she became more willing to challenge others’ ideas, offering her own opinions and interpretations. She also became more critical and was more willing to express alternate opinions in the small group setting. Thus, Anna’s case is important in understanding how students negotiated discussion depending on the implicit rules associated with each context individually (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Anna’s case demonstrates the ways in which students might carefully craft responses as a way of authoring identity positions across contexts (Gumperz, 2000; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Anna appeared to maintain a similar positional identity across both contexts as she worked to be seen as a positive and collaborative participant. Her case also highlights the ways in which multiple contexts

provided opportunities for students to try out different discussion strategies, thus expanding their repertoires for response. Specifically, although Anna maintained a positive and collaborative positionality across groups, she was more willing to challenge others' ideas and engage in arguments in the small group.

Anna in the Whole Group

During whole group reading sessions, Anna sat on the carpet near the teacher, focusing with rapt attention. She raised her hand to participate often, speaking at least once per read-aloud session. It was apparent that Anna paid careful attention to the stories, as I often saw her laughing when the text was humorous, gasping when something shocking happened, or looking nervous when the text was suspenseful or exciting. She was called upon to share often, likely because her contributions were predictably relevant and constructive in that they built on what other students said or supported a story element. Her participation might be described as that of a mature conversant who recognized that turns during the whole group setting were supposed to be brief, relevant, and collaborative (Grice, 1975).

Further, as Anna actively constructed her contributions to read-aloud discussions, she self-authored as a positive person who worked with others and predicted outcomes to stories that resulted in characters accomplishing goals or becoming content (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Holland & Leander, 2004; Erickson, 1995). In addition to building comprehension, responding to literature in group settings also seems to be a place where students employ language and sign systems that enable them to communicate beliefs, norms, motives, and identities as well as to position themselves in

relation to others (Galda & Beach, 2001). Holland et al. (1998) suggest that this public positioning acts as a way of claiming identity status among group members. Thus, when students respond to texts in social contexts, they are provided with opportunities to “author” themselves as particular types of respondents who hold important knowledge about specific subjects. Anna demonstrated this function of talk in the whole group setting as she used language and her understandings of tacit rules of participation within the whole group context as a way to gain the social position of a positive and relevant conversant (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). For instance, in the excerpt below, the class discussed a scene in *Dumpling Soup* (Rattigan, 1998), the story of a Hawaiian girl learning about a family tradition of making dumplings as part of a New Year’s Eve celebration. In this story, the main character, Marissa, expresses nervousness and anxiety about her dumplings being perfect like those of her mother and aunt. Mrs. Mackendale paused at a point in the text, describing Marissa’s struggle to find the right technique for making dumplings.

Mrs. Mackendale: So you can see that they are working together, they are putting the filling inside, I guess it’s like a dough type of substance, and they put the filling inside, and then they wrap them up and pinch the sides together. So they all have a special way that they make them. So I wonder what Marissa’s way will be, you know, she’s never made them before. Anna?

Anna: Maybe it'll be the best one there, and maybe the aunts will be surprised because it was her first time.

Mrs. Mackendale: Could be, yeah, I hope that she feels successful, because sometimes when you do something for the first time it can be a little scary and can make you feel a little nervous. Has that ever happened to you before? When you try something for the first time? Yeah, you really want to do your best, and you haven't had practice, so it's kinda hard, but you just want to do the best that you can. [*Dumpling Soup* Transcript, December 3, 2012]

In her response, Anna predicts that Marissa's story will end with a desirable outcome, despite the text's description that she is a novice at dumpling making. Specifically, if Anna's prediction were to come true, the course of the story would change so that the character experienced a positive outcome. This contribution represents a pattern in Anna's responses that constitutes her "signature response style" in the whole group setting (Sipe, 2008). Throughout Anna's participation in the whole group, she could be seen drawing on various techniques including intertextual and personal connections to texts in ways that supported characters or predicted happy endings to stories. At times, she also stepped into stories, expressing how she might re-author or change character behavior in ways that might result in more favorable outcomes. Thus, this example demonstrates the ways in which Anna utilized the whole group context as a place in

which she might build and reinforce her identities through her responses (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998).

Also of interest here is the way in which Mrs. Mackendale supported and reinforced Anna's contribution. Holland et al. (1998) go on to argue that while self-authoring is an agentic act, identity positions are reinforced in relation to how they are received within contexts. In other words, Anna's identity approaches to response were solidified as Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky offered support of her position by engaging with her contribution. For instance, in the example above, Anna began her turn at talk hedging her contribution with the word "maybe," projecting her contribution as being hypothetical or imaginary and then positioning it as a prediction. This tentative frame indicates that Anna looked for further verification from others within the interpretive community (Smithson & Dias, 1996). She received reinforcement for her developing theory about the plot when Mrs. Mackendale validated ("could be") and then expanded upon Anna's turn, indicating that she had the same "hope" as Anna. Mrs. Mackendale asked others to consider the story by making personal connections to the feelings of uncertainty Marissa is feeling. By aligning with Anna's position here, Mrs. Mackendale modeled the ways in which students might collaboratively construct and support meaning-making by constructing coherent beliefs about a single text or textual episode (Rogoff & Toma, 1997) and marked Anna's contribution as relevant. Anna received similar positive feedback and praise for her contributions across all 22 read-alouds, which supported and reinforced her approaches to response.

Drawing on Intertextuality to Make Meaning

When Anna spoke in whole group sessions, it was common for her to offer intertextual connections that supported predictions she was making or as a way of presenting an explanation to an episode in the text. In Anna's case, intertextuality can be defined as both the expression of personal connections and connections between texts. Sipe (2002), drawing on Bahktin's notion of heteroglossia, argues that connecting texts to lived experiences demonstrates deep engagement with stories and acts as a way to create and restructure events so that new conventions might be realized. Lemke (1992) suggests that the language and cultural systems operating within a context determine the types of intertextual connections that are available and valorized. Thus, intertextual connections often act as autobiographical responses that demonstrate the cultural and linguistic similitude between individual's responses to the words on the page and the contexts in which the connection is shared (Rosenblatt, 1995).

Anna's use of intertextual links demonstrated a willingness to take over and transform stories in personal ways that demonstrated a deep understanding of text structure. Further, her propensity to make predictions that resulted in favorable outcomes for characters made her intertextual connections a platform for her to express her own positivity. The following two subsections highlight the ways in which Anna drew on both types of intertextual connections in read-aloud discussions.

Drawing on intertextuality to make predictions. As noted above, Anna gravitated towards predicting outcomes that were positive, resulting in characters meeting goals or overcoming obstacles. She often drew on personal experiences to help support

and explain her contributions in ways that held the potential to help her identify the ways in which she was similar to or different from story elements and characters (Sipe, 2008). For instance, as the reading of *Dumpling Soup* from above progressed, the class came to a scene in which Marissa's confidence is shaken when her uncle makes comments about how the dumplings she's making don't match the uniformity of those made by older family members. Anna joined the conversation again, relaying a personal connection that suggested there was still hope that the story may have a happy ending.

Mrs. Mackendale: Yeah. Anna?

Anna: I have a connection to her dumplings. Once I made eggs on the stove and it looked really, I guess you could say gross, but when I tried it, it was really good.

Mrs. Mackendale: Oh good.

Anna: That she's going to like it when she tastes it.

Mrs. Mackendale: Thank you for sharing your connection. [*Dumpling Soup* Transcript, December 3, 2012]

Once again, Anna used her personal experience as evidence that a favorable outcome was still a possibility. Sipe (2002) argues that personal responses act as a way for children to make sense of texts, but Anna seemed to go beyond sense making, leveraging her described experience as support for her prediction. Hence, she drew on life-to-text connections to create worlds that presented certain values, beliefs, and allegiances (Beach, 2001), giving the impression that she was aware of a tension between her belief and hope that Marissa's story will end happily and the description of Marissa's

experience in the text. She related a parallel story from her own life to illustrate that there may still be hope that Marissa will successfully acquire the family tradition.

Anna's contribution to this conversation positioned her as a compliant, relevant, and affirming respondent, thus communicating her position as a person who looks for hopeful prospects despite challenges (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Mrs. Mackendale reinforced Anna's positive approaches to responses by modeling a supportive response ("oh good") and providing encouraging remarks after each time Anna spoke ("Thank you for sharing your connection. "). This reinforcement communicated to Anna that her approaches were valid and acceptable.

The following example is similar in that Anna drew on an intertextual connection as a way to make and explain predictions that prognosticated positive outcomes. However, rather than using a personal example, Anna drew on another story she'd seen in a television program. In the example above and in the one that follows, Anna demonstrates an understanding that personal connections that result in happy endings were sanctioned responses in the whole group context. The following excerpt was generated when Mrs. Mackendale stopped just after a scene in *Sadako* (Coerr, 1997), the story of a young girl's struggle with cancer, depicting Sadako's, the title character's, parents begging her to continue to fight the cancer.

Mrs. Mackendale: Anna?

Anna: Um, once on this show there was this guy, he wanted to beat this record so, he had to do 500 sky diving

things, and he never gave up, even when he was hurt, and I bet that's how Sadako is feeling.

Mrs. Mackendale: That's a good example of someone, I guess, using the life skill of perseverance, and keeping up their positivity and things like that. That seems like a hard challenge. [*Sadako* Transcript, December 10, 2012]

Here Anna used an intertextual connection to help her build a positive narrative about Sadako's fate. She drew on her memory of the man trying to beat his skydiving record being hurt as a way to explain the pain Sadako felt as she went through chemotherapy. To make her contribution predictive, she stitched together the end of the narrative about the skydiving man (he never gave up and reached his goal) with Sadako, predicting how Sadako may be feeling and that she might overcome the obstacle that faced her. Anna's connections here seemed to help build meaning in ways that helped her develop complicated stories that satisfied her propensity to predict endings in which characters met their goals, or, in the case of Sadako, survived (Sipe, 2000).

Intertextuality as a scaffold. Anna also used personal intertextual connections to support textual explanations, characters, teachers, or the author in ways that facilitated more complete comprehension for herself and others. In what follows, the class discussed a passage from *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988), in which the author described Matilda's extraordinary reading ability by describing a series of classic adult texts she'd read by the age of three. Mrs. Mackendale followed the author's cues, expressing amazement at the idea that Matilda could read texts written for adults at such a young age. Anna added to

the conversation by relaying a personal experience that supported the amazement expressed by Mrs. Mackendale and the text.

Mrs. Mackendale: So, she's taught herself to read by the age of three, not even in pre-kindergarten yet, and the only book lying around the house at this point is a cookbook, and she's read the whole book and memorized the recipes. So I'm wondering, what is she going to do next? She's really interested in reading, no one's paying attention to her though. What's going to happen to her? Anna?

Anna: My sister is four and she's about to turn five and she can barely write, and she's not very good at reading.

Mrs. Mackendale: Well that makes sense because of her age. That totally makes sense. So you can kinda compare her to Matilda and Matilda must be a genius. Yeah, that's very unusual.

Anna: When I heard that I was like, whoa.

Mrs. Mackendale: Yeah, you have that something to compare it to. That's a good connection. [*Matilda* Transcript, October 1, 2012]

Anna drew on her lived experience of observing her younger sister's attempts at reading to provide an endorsement for the position that Matilda is exceptional. In her second turn

to talk, Anna echoed the sentiment of amazement expressed by Mrs. Mackendale and the author, further aligning herself with their positions. With this connection, Anna made visible the ways in which she drew a comparison between her little sister and Matilda as a way to reinforce the evidence provided by the text. Her connection here scaffolded her understanding in tandem with the story as she experienced it (Sipe, 2000), thus reinforcing and supporting the reactions of the author, Mrs. Mackendale, herself, and other students.

The following is a similar example in that Anna shared information from her personal experience that reinforced the position of the author. In this example, Anna's connection acted as further support for another student's meaning-making. What follows was generated as Ms. Sadowsky responded to a question Audrey asked about what the word "bluffing" meant after Henry, the main character in *Chocolate Fever* (Smith, 1976), is described as tricking bullies into thinking that his disease is contagious, resulting in the boys running away.

Ms. Sadowsky: So when you bluff, you say that something is true, so for example, in this situation, he's telling people that he has a horrible deadly disease, and the boys are saying, oh you're just bluffing. So they're saying you're just lying to us, so you know, we won't touch you. So they're saying, that's not true, you're bluffing, you're lying to us, and he was like, up to you to find out.

Javier: (inaudible)

Ms. Sadowsky: It took a lot of courage, didn't it? Yeah, to be in that situation, to be surrounded like that? You're right Javier. Yeah, all those people.

Student: They said that they were around them?

Ms. Sadowsky: In this picture they are, but right, you're right, the author did describe them as surrounding him, and in this picture it looks like they are just looking at him. So maybe this is after he told them that he has the fever (points at Anna).

Anna: Sometimes I do that to my sister. I say, "If you come in my room, you'll be sorry." And then she's like, "No, I won't." And then I'm like, "Well, find out," and she just walks off.

Ms. Sadowsky: Ahh, so your bluffing works. [*Chocolate Fever* Transcript, September 12, 2012]

In this example, Anna's contribution provided experiential support for Ms. Sadowsky's explanation of the word "bluffing," providing Audrey with another concrete example of the word. Her story here also provided support for Henry by indicating that bluffing might be an appropriate and effective way to avoid unwanted situations. Here, Anna's meaning-making extended beyond her own understanding, thus acting as a scaffold for other students.

Anna's intertextual links seemed to function both as a way for her to analyze and make sense of stories while also functioning as creative, aesthetic expressions that allowed her to take over stories in ways that were satisfying to her (Sipe, 2000). Anna's ability to make and relay intertextual connections seemed to act as an important conceptual pivot in her understanding of complicated narratives. Further, the similarity in her attempts at creating positive and supportive narratives across read-alouds seems to indicate stability in her identity as a person who "wants to make everybody happy," [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2014], (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Sipe, 2002).

Enacting Transparent Responses

Anna also responded in the whole group by stepping into character roles, describing what she might do to alter events so that resolutions might be realized. Sipe (2000) argues that this type of transparent response in which children live through characters' experiences optimizes the transformative power of literacy. Thus, Anna often took agency when she stepped into stories, re-authoring the characters in ways that resulted in desirable outcomes being realized.

Anna's transparent responses typically began with phrases such as "If I were _____, I would...", "Maybe..." or, "It could be that...", and were followed by Anna describing how she might act in a resourceful manner that solved some sort of problem for a character. For instance, in the following example, the class listened to a chapter in *Chocolate Fever* (Smith, 1976) in which the main character, Henry, has been taken to a doctor who seems less than qualified to make any kind of diagnosis. Specifically, the

doctor cannot remember his own name, forgets where he put his medical equipment, and says contradictory things, (e.g. “Those are just your typical, rare brown spots”). Students responded to the description of inadequacy in various ways. At times they laughed; at other times, they suggested that Henry’s parents should take him elsewhere for medical care, and some students suggested the doctor was a fake, incompetent, and even drunk. When it was Anna’s turn to join the conversation, she stepped into the shoes of the nurse, an auxiliary character, who is described briefly as standing in the room next to the inept doctor.

Ms. Sadowsky: The doctor, what he’s saying isn’t making sense. Anna?

Anna: Um, well I just wanted to say something, if I were in the book right now, and I was the nurse, I would whisper in Dr. Fargo’s ear “Don’t say that out loud...” (giggling).
Because he kept on saying, “I’ve never seen this before.”

Ms. Sadowsky: Yeah. How do you think that makes Henry feel?

[*Chocolate Fever* Transcript, September 21, 2012]

In this example, Anna placed herself within the pages of the story, evaluating and personalizing the story (Sipe, 2008). As her peers demonized the doctor by suggesting something might be wrong with him, Anna chose to imagine and illuminate a possible solution that might be helpful to the doctor, despite the text describing his ineptitude. Stating she’d “whisper into his ear” may additionally indicate that she recognized a need for sensitivity to both Henry’s fears and to the need for the doctor to appear professional or a wish to preserve the feelings of the doctor. This allowed her to manage and control

the story in a way that was communicated by her approach to mediate problems in a helpful and constructive way, thus presenting an opportunity to re-author the story as well as to verbally compose herself as a particular kind of respondent (Holland & Leander, 2004; Sipe, 2008). Further, in this example Anna demonstrated an understanding of the malleability of stories, a stance that was reinforced as Ms. Sadowsky replied back to her (“yeah”), and then called the group to consider how Henry felt as a result of the doctor’s actions. Ms. Sadowsky extended Anna’s turn by suggesting that the behavior of the doctor (“He kept on saying ‘I’ve never seen that before’”) had implications for Henry. This move was important because it dually reinforced and validated Anna’s contribution, and asked students to consider the narrative by seeing it from the character’s perspective.

The following is a similar example in that Anna stepped into a story in a way that demonstrated her willingness to help someone in need. This talk was generated as the students discussed a scene in which the reader discovers that Matilda’s beloved teacher, Miss Honey, lives in an impoverished situation. The general focus of the conversation was to determine how and why a teacher could live in poverty. Students suggested that perhaps Miss Honey was robbed, wasn’t wise with her money, or “...maybe she just made a big mistake after college, and she like spent all her money,” [*Matilda* Transcript, October 19, 2012]. As in the above example, Anna stepped into the story, offering a solution that might help make Miss Honey’s life more comfortable.

Mrs. Mackendale: Anna?

Anna: I would bring a little food every day because Miss Honey’s her teacher.

Mrs. Mackendale: Oh, so Matilda could bring her some food from home every day. [*Matilda* Transcript, October 19, 2012]

Once again, Anna elected to step into the story in a supportive way that presented a positive solution to the problem Miss Honey faced. These contributions dually situated Anna as problem solver and as someone who supports people in need (Holland et al., 1998). Further, Anna's response here demonstrates how she was willing to think about scenarios in creative ways that forged connections between her own lived experiences and those of the characters. This type of connected orientation to the story world is important because it enables students to consider life from various perspectives, empowering them to consider how they might make changes or do things differently (Sipe, 2000). As shown here and in the example above, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky supported and encouraged this type of response in the read-aloud context.

Anna's participation in whole group settings was marked by her willingness to share her lived experiences in order to provide support for characters, authors, other students, or for teachers. She drew on her understandings of the tacit rules of participation in read-aloud contexts to participate in ways that appeared appropriate and valuable. In many ways, Anna's contributions to whole group discussions were predictable in that she seemed to consistently draw on intertextual connections and exhibit deep engagement through transparent responses. Anna drew on personal experiences as a way of drawing parallels between the story and real life to provide support for the author, characters, or the teachers. Sociocultural theorists argue that the fossilization of particular approaches to discourse results from successful mediation of

cultural tools over time (Bakhtin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978). Holland et al. (1998) argue that internalization of approaches results in evidence of the original mediating tools ceasing to be apparent, thus the characteristic becomes a seemingly essential trait of the person. The reinforcement of Anna's positive participation in the whole group resulted in repeated attempts at the same approach. Her positive contributions seemed to be endearing to the group, as she was never challenged or questioned when she contributed. Further, she seemed to follow particular rules related to participating in whole group settings including participating frequently, answering in ways that were satisfying to the teachers, and ensuring that her contributions were positive, concise and relevant.

Anna in Small Groups

Anna was an active participant in both small groups. Her first literature circle comprised Melissa and Javier. This group had a total of five meetings and met to discuss the stories at their table. Anna's second book club, comprised of Gavin, Joseph, and Jessica, read *Gregor the Overlander* (Collins, 2004) – a story about a boy and his baby sister who accidentally fall down a laundry chute to discover a secret underworld of New York City. As the pair tries to find their way back to the Overland, the characters discover that they are actually destined to fulfill a prophecy that would save the creatures of the Underland from impending doom. This group consistently met outside of the classroom because "...it is quieter in the hallway" [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]. In total, they met 12 times over the course of two weeks, sometimes meeting twice in one day.

Similar to her participation in the whole group setting, Anna predicted positive outcomes for characters; however, she was much less likely to draw on personal intertextual connections. Rather, in the small group, Anna generated solutions that were not necessarily based on other sources. Further, the small group acted as a venue in which Anna was confronted with other students challenging her construction of meaning, calling her to defend her ideas. Hence, Anna seemed to recognize that she occupied a different role in the small group than she did in the whole group. The small group also presented opportunities for Anna to try out more critical approaches to discussion. She was more willing to ask questions and present arguments that contrasted with other students' ideas (although she was always respectful). She was also more willing to ask questions about things that confused her in the small group setting.

Anna Affirming Others and Clarifying Confusion

In the small group, Anna seemed to contribute in ways that affirmed others' contributions. It was common for her to answer other students' questions and give positive affirmation (e.g. "that's what I thought too") after her peers made contributions. For instance, in the following example, Jessica stated some confusion about a scene in the story in which Gregor is trying to escape from the Underland, using a waterway that seemed to appear out of nowhere. Anna joined the conversation in response to Jessica's confusion.

Jessica: It was a bit exciting because it looked like he was finally going to get out. But how could that water get in there anyway, well never

mind, I guess it would have to some how, they didn't have pipe works, but I'm not sure.

Anna: Maybe it came from the beach or something. Maybe there is a pipe up there or something.

Gavin: ...from the place?

Jessica: He might find a way to escape, they might get put into prison, there is a lot of possibilities from that one paragraph.

Gavin: Um, if I were Gregor, in that situation he's in now, I'd find a very, very, very long hose, and like attach it to something, put it in my mouth and jump in the water and like go [*Gregor the Overlander* Transcript, November 8, 2012].

Anna tried to fill in gaps left by the author so that the story would make more sense to Jessica. Unlike her participation in the whole group Anna directly responded to another student's question, thus positioning the possibility as a way to help Jessica come to more complete understandings of the story.

What follows is a similar example in that Anna used her imagination to fill in gaps in the story in ways that extended and clarified the narrative. In the excerpt, the group discussed a scene in in which Gregor escapes from the palace of the Underland, finds boats on a waterway, and attempts to make his way back to the Overland. The author describes the treacherous nature of the waterway, sparking confusion among the group. Gavin initiated the talk by asking a question that challenged the plot sequence in this part of the story.

Gavin: I wonder why there are boats if it is way too dangerous to go down there anyway.

Jessica: Oh... I'm not sure there...

Anna: I wonder that, too.

Gavin: ...And there are even bats.

Jessica: Yeah, because it was underground and nobody was supposed to escape. It makes me think that the Underlanders put it there with a tracking device or something.

Gavin: Yeah, with the boats that say don't escape, don't escape.

Anna: Maybe the boats are like a secret security like maybe.

Gavin: How would they be security?

Anna: I mean not security, but I mean like whenever someone takes them down or something there is an alarm that goes off when the...

Jessica: But you can't hear it when the boats go down.

Anna: Yeah, a like camera, or...

Gavin: Yeah, like there is that creek... except for the fact that none of this would have happened if the boats weren't there, so they wouldn't need that security system.

Jessica: ...But the boats were there.

Gavin: I know, but if they weren't there, they wouldn't even need that security system because how would they get down?

Jessica: That's weird. [*Gregor the Overlander* Transcript, November 13, 2012]

Half of Anna's contributions here are overt affirmative agreements for either Jessica or Gavin's ideas. Like her participation in the example above, Anna joined the conversation by echoing Gavin's confusion, and then attempted to add to the conversation by introducing her own idea that there could be a security camera present. Anna continued to attempt to support Gavin and Jessica throughout this episode by building on their talk, acknowledging their questions, and considering possibilities they posed, even when Gavin challenged her. Anna's attempts at building meaning in the examples above are similar to her participation in the whole group in that she appeared to support the initial speakers' intentions. In these examples, Anna contributed as a collaborative group member who used her imagination to make predictions about what might be and to fill in gaps that left ambiguity in the story.

Posing Possibilities to Build Meaning

Similar to her contributions in the whole group setting, Anna seemed to take on the role of a positive and collaborative group member in small groups. It was common for Anna to validate the initiator of a sequence of talk by using phrases such as "I agree..." or "it's like _____ was saying" followed by her own question about the text. These questions added to collaborative problem solving among the group. For instance, the talk from the following example was generated around a scene in which Gregor's plans for escape from the Underworld are foiled when he inadvertently starts a fire by dropping a torch on a sandy shoreline. Gavin initiated the discussion by stating his

confusion about how sand and oil could cause the catastrophic blaze described by the author.

Gavin: I wondered how the beacon was on fire. It's just sand, even with that tiny bit of oil, it's just sand, sand.

Jessica: It does seem a bit weird.

Anna: Yeah, I was kind of confused.

Jessica: 'Cause it's near the water. I was kind of confused on that one, too.

Anna: And what made the fire? Like... And what made the fire light?

Jessica: Oh, the torch.

Gavin: The torch, he dropped it onto the oil, that was sand.

Jessica: I know. I thought fire only burned on sticks, not on rocks and minerals. [*Gregor the Overlander* Transcript, November 12, 2012]

Anna's contribution here was equally supportive of others' ideas and effective in conveying her own thoughts. She joined the conversation initially aligning with Gavin and Jessica. She then reiterated Gavin's question, claiming it as her own, after which Gavin drew on problem solving strategies to answer the question.

The following excerpt is similar in that Anna joined the conversation in collaboration with others followed by the introduction of her own question. Anna joined the subsequent conversation in response to a quandary posed by Gavin as the group read a section of text in which Boots, the two-year-old sister of the story's hero, is named the princess of the Underland.

Gavin: Why did the roaches say that Boots was a princess? I mean that's just weird.

Jessica: Well, maybe, because she smelled like poo and the roaches liked to eat it or something, and they liked her or something and they respect her because she's an Overlander or something.

Gavin: I don't know...

Jessica: What do you think, Anna?

Anna: I agree with you, too. You two?

Gavin: I agree, too... Um, how did the girl get there? I mean you can't just teleport, (mumbling) well there must be different options.

Jessica: Well, maybe...

Anna: Well, maybe it was underground, so she fell through the hole, got there, and then went through all these different passageways and just ended up in the arena, but what I don't understand is why there were no doors along the passageways and the arena is just round.

Gavin: Well, one thing I want to say about that is if that is true, how did she get in the back? And another thing um, I think someone would have noticed if a strange girl had walked into their house, because it is their lawn, it is their laundry machine that they lived in.

Jessica: Well, actually it's a laundry place, where there are washers and dryers... [*Gregor the Overlander* Transcript, November 7, 2012]

Jessica invited Anna into the conversation, resulting in Anna providing a positive endorsement for Jessica's idea. As the conversation continued, she continued to collaborate with Gavin, posing a possible answer to the question about how Boots and Gregor ended up in the Underland in the first place. Unlike the example above, Anna maintained the floor, asking her own, original question about the setting of the story. Gavin challenged Anna's question by suggesting that if there were no doors along the passageway, Gregor and Boots would have no way to get back to the Overland. Anna didn't contest or argue Gavin's challenge, even though his solution did not exactly answer her query. Rather, she removed herself from the conversation, allowing Gavin and Jessica to continue to engage in banter about gaps in the story sequence.

Similar to her responses in the whole group, this intertextual approach to response demonstrated Anna's marked engagement with the text as well as illustrated Anna's willingness to control or change texts in ways that facilitated comprehension (Sipe, 2000). These examples also illustrate the ways in which certain approaches to response were apparent across contextual spaces. Hence, Anna's case illustrates that students might exhibit a stability in approaches to response across contexts.

Presenting Challenges to Support Reasoning

At times, Anna's attempts at meaning-making resulted in her presenting challenges to others' ideas. Almasi (1995), among others (e.g. Clark & Anderson, 2001),

argues that such cognitive conflicts act as a way for students to develop skills in argumentation as well as facilitate conceptual change and development. For Anna, this was a different approach to discussion in that in the whole group setting she rarely directly contrasted what others had to say. The small group seemed to be a space where Anna was comfortable offering counter information and countering ideas. For instance, in the next excerpt, the group worked together to collaboratively predict where the plot might lead. At the specific juncture in the text being discussed, the reader is introduced to the idea that Gregor's father, who has been described as having abandoned the family, may actually have fallen into the Underworld in the same fashion as Gregor and Boots. The group worked together, trying to decide what might have become of Gregor's father.

Gavin: Tha'd be... How'd his dad get there anyway?

Anna: Yeah?

Jessica: Well, there are different passageways, so I think he went through the same one. Maybe, wait. The waterway had to connect to somewhere else didn't it?

Anna: Yeah.

Jessica: Maybe, he went through that way. Like picking rocks in the river and then he fell in...

Gavin: Didn't it say he was at his house and then...

Jessica: (Talking over Gavin) ...cause a waterway always has to end.

Anna: Well, um, I remember it said that his dad also really wanted to get home, so maybe he did the same thing as Gregor did, he went

through the waterway and then it said that the Underlanders weren't fast enough so maybe the Underlanders still have him.

Jessica: Well, maybe he came down the waterway and they didn't tell him and so

that's how he knew to get back. Hmmm.

Anna: But it says that they're too late, so I think that he (Gregor) used to think that he (the father) died then maybe now they regret that thought, because maybe the rats do have the dad? [*Gregor the Overlander* Transcript, November 13, 2012]

Anna initially agreed with both Jessica and Gavin, following their turns by saying "Yeah." However, as the conversation continued, Anna offered textual evidence that countered Jessica's prediction that Gregor's father found the passage way and was able to escape the Underland. Through this discussion, Anna and her group members were able to verbalize and compare individual interpretations, which made visible possible approaches to response. In a Vygotskian sense, these students were exposed to inconsistencies with their own responses on a social plane, which may result in the amendment of approaches to response in the future (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, this opportunity to learn about and adjust interpretations through discussions acts as a way for children to develop internal, self-monitoring strategies (Rosenblatt, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978).

The following example is similar in that Anna contrasted others' ideas by expressing her unique interpretation of story events. The following episode was

generated as the group discussed a scene in which Gregor lamented being stuck in the Underland and worried that he and Boots would never escape. Jessica initiated the conversation by voicing confusion about why the characters would want to escape when everybody in the Underland treated them so nicely.

Jessica: Why did Gregor want to escape? It's like weird to me, like they are being so nice to you and trying not to treat you like a prisoner, and like...

Anna: I know why...

Jessica: Anna?

Anna: I think maybe that because he is afraid that Boots will get hurt or something or that his mom is worried or something and so ...

Jessica: I know but, wouldn't you just want to stay in that place if someone was being so nice to you? I mean it's like an undiscovered person, I mean it's like an undiscovered place by an Overlander.

Anna: I think, my feeling is that I wouldn't want to stay there.

Gavin: I would probably get a big drill and like bzzzz (drill noise; acts out drilling)

Anna: To get out of there?

Gavin: Yeah. [*Gregor the Overlander* Transcript, November 12, 2012]

Anna joined the discussion in a way that challenged Jessica's thinking directly. In this example, Anna abandoned her previous need to enter conversations by first validating the

initial speaker's thoughts and posing a potential possibility; rather, she gained the floor by indicating that she "knew" the answer. When Jessica maintained her original position Anna clarified her challenge by placing herself in Gregor's shoes, making explicit the depiction of his perceived responsibility to return Boots home unharmed. This type of contribution was rare for Anna, only appearing when she participated in small groups.

The following is similar to the above two examples in that Anna added challenges to other group members' ideas and offered her own interpretation. In the scene being discussed, Gregor attempts to escape the Underland after he finds out that he is being made responsible for saving the kingdom from the antagonist rat king. In the middle of the night, he and Boots run towards a waterway that they believe leads back up to the Overland. Their attempts at escaping are unsuccessful because they set off an alarm that alerts Lexia, the princess of the Underland, that they are trying to escape. Gregor and Boots are collected by Lexia's bat army and returned to the castle where they are scolded for trying to run. In the excerpt below, the group worked together to try and make sense of Lexia's feelings towards Gregor. They attempt to reconcile the tension between the prophecy naming Gregor as a savior and Lexia's expressed disappointment in his escape attempts.

Jessica: I think she would think he was the warrior, well he did protest, well she was convinced that he was convinced that he was a warrior.

Anna: I don't think that Lexia likes him being the warrior in this part of the book. I think she wants to help his father.

Jessica: I sort of think she thinks he's the warrior and sort of not. But I do think she's not allowed to be...

Gavin: I think she thinks he's an idiot.

Anna: Wait what?

Gavin: An idiot. I think she thinks he thinks she's stupid.

Jessica: No...

Gavin: Seriously, he tried to run away.

Anna: That was in the path (prophecy).

Gavin: That's not something warriorly. Seriously. (everybody laughs)

[*Gregor the Overlander* Transcript, November 15, 2012]

Anna built on Jessica's idea by suggesting that Lexia may not like being stuck with Gregor as the warrior. Gavin joined to confirm Anna's assessment that Lexia is dissatisfied with Gregor's behavior, providing specific evidence (he tried to run away). Anna contends that Gregor's running is described as being part of the prophecy, and "in the path;" thus she offers textual evidence in a way that provides counter evidence to Gavin's reasoning.

Anna Across Groups

Anna seemed to have in-depth knowledge of the tacit rules of participation embedded in both whole group and small group settings. Specifically, she seemed to recognize that in the whole group, her role was to contribute brief, relevant responses that were in some way supportive of another classmate, her teachers, characters in stories, or the author. In the small group, Anna participated in ways that indicated she felt more

freedom to argue and express alternate or contrasting opinions. In an interview, Anna claimed that her response patterns and role maintained consistency across the discussion contexts. She specifically argued that there was no difference in the content of talk across contexts, claiming, "...we talk about the same things" [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]. However, she did state a preference for discussing texts in the small group setting: "It's easier to actually cooperate with your group, instead of having to cooperate with the whole class" [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]. Anna went on to say, "...well, like I don't know if I'm in a bigger group, it's harder for me to be flexible, cause there are so many people with so many different thoughts. I can just be more flexible" [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]. Thus, Anna seemed to know how to navigate the rules of participation, which allowed her to gain access to conversations across contexts (Erickson, 1995). It seems as though these opportunities to participate in various groups afforded Anna the opportunity to respond to texts in a variety of ways, thus expanding her repertoire of discussion techniques.

Although she demonstrated variation in the ways her responses were positioned, she maintained elements of her response style in which she supported other members of the conversation by positively aligning herself with their positions, even when arguing. The positive nature of Anna's responses seemed to fit with the notion that she worked to be supportive and collaborative [Teacher Interview, April 28, 2013]. Holland et al. (1998) argue that while identity positions are fluid and constructed through social interactions within contexts, an element of stability results as individuals draw on psychohistorical formations that are embedded in individuals' ways of knowing. Thus, Anna's case

illustrates the ways in which she drew on identity positions that were nonnegotiable across contexts.

Mia

Mia, a small, Latina girl with long, brown hair and brown eyes, was an eight-year-old third grader in Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's class. Mia's sixth-grade brother had once been a student in this multi-grade class, so Mia's parents knew Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's well. She lived in the neighborhood surrounding Meadowbrook, which allowed her to ride her skateboard to school every day. Ms. Sadowsky and Mrs. Mackendale characterized Mia's parents as very supportive and involved in her academic and social endeavors. They specifically mentioned that her parents came to conferences, asked how they could support Mia, and looked for ways to enhance her academic development. Outside school, Mia participated in competitive skateboarding activities, but didn't necessarily identify as a reader [Teacher Interview, February 28, 2013]. Mia's teachers considered her to be an average student academically. They described her as a student who always completed high quality work on time. However, her scores on standardized tests fell from the first administration to the second indicating to the teachers that she struggled with particular skills related to reading.

Socially, Mia was a very active member of the class. Both teachers reported that she had many friends [Teacher Interview, April 28, 2013] and that many children chose to sit near her during read-alouds [Field Notes]. She appeared to be socially skilled, as she engaged others in talk often. She frequently participated in a variety of class discussions; however, it was uncommon for her to volunteer to contribute during whole group read-aloud discussions. When she did contribute, Mia offered criticism about

perceived injustices she found in texts or expressed connections that demonstrated how her experiences mirrored those of the characters. This propensity to express her opinions about events that were unsatisfying transferred into her evaluation of regular classroom practices. For instance, when asked about her participation in book clubs, Mia expressed some dissatisfaction with the fact that “This is like a 200-page book and we have to have meetings and we don’t have time to have meetings and to read,” [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]. While she advocated for conditions that would make her classroom experience more pleasant, Mia also encouraged her classmates to comply with teacher expectations and rules. She acted as discussion mediator on many occasions, promoting acquiescence of the directives for which she voiced criticism.

Case Selection: Mia

Mia was chosen as a focal student because her responses were constructed utilizing both objective and subjective realities (Langer, 1990) in which Mia read narratives for a variety of purposes. Langer (1990) argues comprehension and meaning-making are developed over time, as readers take on a variety of stances that add dimensions of understanding to both narrative and informative texts. Mia’s case demonstrates the ways in which these stances can be activated as part of collaborative meaning-making sessions. Mia seemed to draw equally on analytic techniques and transparent responses to complete understandings as she lived through characters. Mia’s expression of these orientations towards individual comprehension seemed to facilitate more complete meaning-making for herself and others across both reading contexts.

Mia's case also illustrates the ways in which Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky created space for Mia to explore her responses with others. Further, they provided scaffolds on which Mia had opportunities to examine her approaches to discussions. On several occasions, either Mrs. Mackendale or Ms. Sadowsky prompted Mia to expand her contributions in ways that facilitated a more reasoned explanation for her contributions, thus acting as catalysts for Mia to add complexity and depth to her responses.

Mia in the Whole Group

Mia was relatively quiet and seemingly distracted in read-aloud settings. She participated a total of nine times over the course of 22 group discussions. At times, Mia could be seen running her fingers over the carpet, staring at different objects around the room, or talking to Sarah [Field Notes, October 15, 2012], seeming as though she was not paying attention. However, this apparent disengagement was never blatant enough to warrant re-direction from the teachers, perhaps because they knew that although Mia appeared to be disengaged, she was, in fact, attending closely to what was being read aloud. Upon analysis of recordings taken by a remote microphone positioned near Mia, it became apparent to me that Mia was not only engaged in stories, but often chose to live through texts, often speaking back to characters. In most cases, Mia's enactments were whispered-under her breath, out of the hearing range of other students. In an interview at the end of the semester, Mia reported that the pressure to respond quickly during read-alouds made her uncomfortable, so she often chose not to participate in discussions [Small Group Interview, November 17, 2012].

When Mia did elect to contribute to whole group discussions, she often collaboratively engaged with her teachers or other students. As shown through her participation in Liam's case, Mia seemed to recognize her role in the interpretive community as a person who had the right and responsibility to enable other children's meaning-making by offering explanations, probing thinking, and asking for clarification (Fish, 1980). In these instances, Mia seemed to reveal her own approaches to meaning-making in ways that helped others come to more complete understandings of texts (Langer, 2001). Many of Mia's responses during whole group settings might also be described as transparent responses, in that she seemed to engage so completely with texts that the barriers between her reality and the world of the text were nonexistent (Sipe, 2008). This approach to response illustrates Mia's propensity to draw on aesthetic impulses in ways that empowered her to creatively transform the text.

Mia Drawing on Literary Stance in Efforts to Collaboratively Build Meaning

During read-aloud discussions, Mia often took on a facilitating role in which she enhanced meaning-making for other students. In this role, Mia took the position of a distanced observer leveraging background knowledge in ways that added coherence to stories, clarifying textual ambiguities for others (Langer, 1990; Sipe, 2008). When she took this stance, Mia went beyond the immediate text, inventing emotions, intentions, and motivations for characters that resonated with preexisting schemas about things (behaviors, locations, emotions, etc...) that the text represented (Langer, 1990). For instance, in the following example, the class discussed a scene from *Westlandia* (Fleischman, 2002), the story of a boy who creates his own civilization as a summer

project. Throughout the story, Wesley strives to build his own sustainable food supply, make his own clothes, and live totally off of the land. The following conversation began at a juncture in the text that describes Wesley recognizing that his possessions are of no use to him in his new civilization, so he begins to discard items, such as his watch. Anna asked a clarifying question about Wesley's characterization that would help her come to deeper understanding of the way character emotions and motivations undergird the plot so that she might continue to build a relevant interpretation (Langer, 1990).

Anna: I wonder if he's starting to get greedy, or if he's just like really happy, because I can't really tell, because he got rid of his watch.

Ms. Sadowsky: Yeah.

Anna: I can't tell if... I don't know.

Ms. Sadowsky: Well, I think the reason he got rid of his watch here was because he made himself a sundial, so he was using the sundial to tell time, and remember they were saying that he had divided the day into eight days because it reminded him of the, it was from the petals? On the flowers? And he made up his own counting system based on the number eight because there were eight petals on the flower. So I don't know, what do you guys think? Do you think he's being greedy, or do you think he's really happy? Thoughts? Mia what do you think?

Mia: I think he's just happy, because he's letting everyone use the plants and he's selling his stuff, so if he were being greedy he wouldn't let anyone go near it, or would let anyone have the mosquito repellent.

Ms. Sadowsky: Ok.

Mia: So I think he's just really happy and is trying to make more of it. [*Weslandia* Transcript, September 13, 2012]

Anna initiated this conversation by asking the group for help in characterizing Wesley. Ms. Sadowsky invited Mia to join the conversation after she provided an explanation about the reasons Wesley might have given his watch away (because he made a sundial and didn't need a watch any more), detailing a description about what Wesley did as he built the sundial (divided the day into eight segments because it reminded him of the number of petals on the flower) as a way of re-illuminating the scene for Anna. Mia entered the conversation by providing two contrasting narratives, in which she drew on preexisting understandings of both terms as a way of verbalizing a distinction between happy or greedy (Anderson & Pearson, 1983; Langer, 1990). Thus, her analytic response objectified Wesley's behavior by casting him into two scenarios that reified both happy and greedy as characterizations, offering a conclusion to Anna. Her addition to the conversation here seemed to be satisfying to both Anna and Ms. Sadowsky, as they nodded their heads in agreement. Mia's contribution seemed to clarify the scene so that Anna might be better able to conceptualize the story as she worked to interpret the story.

The following example is similar in that Mia joined a conversation, attempting to address another student's question by drawing on her own background knowledge and assumptions. Just before the episode below occurred, the class had viewed an image in *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story From Iraq* (Winter, 2005), a nonfiction account of the acts of a single librarian to orchestrate movement of valuable manuscripts before a library building is bombed during the Iraq War. The illustration portrays soldiers in uniforms that are not clearly marked with clear identifiers of country dropping from helicopters onto the roof of the library. Melissa raised her hand to ask "which side" the soldiers were on, sparking the following conversation:

Ms. Sadowsky: I don't know what side the soldiers are on, because they are wearing camouflage. So Melissa's question was, were those soldiers fighting for Iraq, or were they fighting for the other side?

Mia: I think they were fighting for Iraq because they are looking around trying to shoot the other people.

Ms. Sadowsky: Oh, maybe they were trying to shoot the other people?

Gavin: And I think if they were on the roof and, like on the other team, wouldn't they try to shoot all the other people? If they were on the other side? [*Librarian of Basra* Transcript, September 7, 2012]

Similar to her participation above, Mia drew on assumptions she had about the dynamics involved in the war in Iraq to construct a narrative that directly answered Melissa's

question. This example, like the one above, demonstrates the ways Mia's background knowledge and lived experiences helped her draw conclusions about character motivations and plot sequences. In this example, Mia used her understanding of the people and places represented by texts as a way to build context for the story in an attempt to help Melissa's understanding move along (Langer, 1990; 2001). However, Mia's assessment here still left ambiguities in terms of the function of the soldiers on the roof and the implications the soldiers had for the narrative.

Ms. Sadowsky restated Mia's contributions so that the soldier's allegiances remained ambiguous, allowing students to maintain freedom in their interpretations (Dutro, 2008). This move seemed to be a purposeful refocusing of the conversation that attempted to help students come to more complete understandings of the thematic and inspirational underpinnings embedded in texts (Sipe, 2008). Specifically, the image being discussed depicted the librarian looking up at the invaders standing on the roof threatening the books she swore to protect, an image that encapsulates the inspirational heroism at the center of the text. Hence, Ms. Sadowsky's move here allowed students to continue to reason through possible answers to Melissa's question, thus growing a complex web of understanding about the relationship between the soldiers and the librarian, the soldiers on the roof and the people at whom they point guns, and the war in general. Langer (1990) suggests that great breakthroughs in comprehension and comprehensive understandings of the implications texts hold for readers' lives occur as students wrestle with possible solutions and are encouraged to develop detailed proofs to convey conclusions to others. Thus, Gavin's follow-up question acts as support for Mia's

contribution in that he suggests that if it weren't for the Iraqi soldiers on the roof, perhaps they would have been trying to shoot the Librarian, the only Iraqi citizen on the page.

Ms. Sadowsky's position as a possible knower facilitated the development of an interpretive session in which students were allowed to develop and refine theories about the story plot.

Mia also facilitated meaning-making by elaborating upon and making connections between her ideas and other students as conversations progressed. This approach at discussion contextualized stories by adding information related to particular story features. For instance, in the following excerpt, the class discussed a scene from *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988) in which Matilda's telekinetic powers are revealed and she is characterized as a witch by the author. As an attempt to layer meaning onto the definition of what it means to be a witch, Liam raised his hand to share an historical anecdote about witches. Both Mrs. Mackendale and Mia responded to Liam.

Liam: In England, there's a law, that no one ever follows, only one person has ever been arrested for it. Yeah, but in England, there's a rule, and no one ever uses it, and only one person has ever been arrested for it, no witches allowed.

Mrs. Mackendale: No witches. So, a long time ago, even in America, people thought that there were witches and they really did think that, and we knew that they weren't really witches, that things happen in nature, and things like

that, so yeah they arrested them and did bad things to them. So yeah, that could be a law, I'm not sure if that's still a law in England or not. Sometimes countries, or even cities in America, have weird laws, like no eating ice cream upside down on Sundays, or something like that. There are weird laws like that, so I wouldn't be surprised.

Liam: It's like a law, but barely anyone follows it anymore, because that's not really what happens.

Mrs. Mackendale: So, I don't know, I'm glad that Miss Honey is going to keep her word, because that really worries me about people finding out about this and, you know, just taking advantage of her. Mia?

Mia: I read this book last year, many times, because it was interesting to me, and Liam was saying that people used to believe that people were witches, and there was this girl who was really strong and stuff and when she was really young they burned her.

Mrs. Mackendale: That is very sad to hear that people thought that. OK, I'm on the top of the next page... (returns to reading).

[*Matilda* Transcript, October 5, 2012]

Mia contribution here added a historical account about the deadly implications of being accused of being a witch. She dually added information to Liam's report that witches aren't allowed in England and elaborated on Mrs. Mackendale's expression that being found out to be a witch might be a bad thing for Matilda. Hence, Mia attempted to clarify her understanding of the textual world by drawing on previously held knowledge about historical events related to the treatment of women who were accused of witchcraft (Langer, 2001). Mrs. Mackendale validated Mia's contribution by responding in a personal way, thus encouraging Mia's attempt at building meaning through the use of an intertextual connection as an appropriate response in the read-aloud context (Sipe, 2008).

When Mia took on the role of facilitator, she dually provided scaffolds for other students' meaning-making (Sipe, 2008) and modeled the objective approaches she took when she constructed interpretations (Langer, 1990). Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky supported Mia's attempts at leveraging her background knowledge in support of collaborative meaning-making, which highlights that students were allowed to take on the role of more knowledgeable other in whole group sessions (Vygotsky, 1978). At various times, both teachers positioned themselves as possible knowers (e.g. "Oh, maybe they were trying to shoot other people?"), encouraging Mia and her peers to respond to and evaluate texts and others' contributions in personal and analytic ways, which facilitated more complicated and complex conversations (Aukerman, 2007). Mia seemed to understand the whole group as a place where she had interpretive license and authority to share her background knowledge in ways that helped others come to more complete understandings of texts.

Transparent Responses

During read-alouds, it was also common for Mia to demonstrate comprehension by exhibiting transparent responses. Sipe (2008) argues that when children live through characters, the story world and reality become transparent to each other. Hence, this feature of Mia's engagement with texts demonstrates her ability to position herself and her ideological dispositions in relation to the story world (Rosenblatt, 1995). At times this type of response may be viewed as off-task or simplistic; however, when children view texts as malleable they are more likely to come to the understanding that a multitude of explanations and possible solutions exist to story problems (Dresang, 1999).

Typically, this approach to response manifested as Mia stepped into the story, talking back to characters or responding as though she were a character. Most often, Mia's transparent responses were unsolicited and spontaneous, occurring as side comments under Mia's breath. For instance, Mia responded this way when reading a scene in *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988) in which Miss Honey's aunt, who also happens to be the headmistress of the school, accuses Miss Honey of lying in order to protect Matilda. In a moment of anger, "the Trunchbull" shouts at Miss Honey, "What do you take me for, a fool?" (Dahl, 1988) Mia responded directly to the Trunchbull, saying "yes," in a forceful whisper. These moments in which Mia lived through characters demonstrate the deep immersion in the story world, engagement in the reading task, and comprehension of plots (Sipe, 2008). However, it was unclear if Mia's comments and interactions with the text were ever heard by the teachers or by other students.

When Mia did choose to share her lived-through responses aloud with the whole group, she imagined herself solving characters' problems, typically imagining that she would act bravely in an attempt to save the day. For instance, after reading a scene in *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988), in which Miss Honey's attempts to have Matilda moved to a more advanced class in order to meet her needs are denied by the Trunchbull and Matilda's parents, Mia raised her hand to share what she would do if she were Miss Honey.

Mia: If I were Miss Honey, I would secretly move Matilda into a older class or I would separate her from all the other kids, I would like separate her from the other kids, I would like keep her after school and teach her then. That's my idea. [*Matilda* Transcript, October 8, 2012]

In this response, Mia placed herself in the shoes of Miss Honey, considering what she might do. In this example, Mia drew on interpretive techniques that revealed her as an active participant in the stories, whose responses are closely guided by the text (Sipe, 2008). Her manipulation and re-authoring of the story demonstrates that she paid close attention to the dynamic of the story world, in that her response is constructed based on the knowledge that Miss Honey doesn't have the decision making power, and she must exercise caution in providing extra support for Matilda.

The whole group context was constructed so that transparent responses were acceptable contributions to meaning-making sessions. Sipe (2008) argues that the willingness and ability to consider events through the eyes of characters positions readers to view texts as transformative tools that might change or alter preconceived notions

about both the story world and reality. Thus Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky presented opportunities for Mia and others to step in and consider situations in active and participatory ways, which seemed important for students' literate, cognitive, and social development. For instance, both teachers specifically asked students to imagine what they would do if they had been one of the characters. For instance, in the following example, Mia added to a conversation in a way that seemed to be less appropriate (as is evidenced by Mrs. Mackendale's response) in the whole group context. Before this episode, Mrs. Mackendale read a section of *Matilda* (Dahl, 1988) that describes how Miss Honey's attempts at getting Matilda support were largely ignored.

Mrs. Mackendale: Well, how would you feel if you were Miss Honey?

Carla: Really bad.

Mia: If I were Miss Honey, I would feel like EVERYONE she wants to talk to has a butt-load of ignorance...

Mrs. Mackendale: A lot of?

Mia: A lot of ignorance.

Mrs. Mackendale: A lot is the word we want to use (laughing). [*Matilda* Transcript, October 1, 2012]

Mrs. Mackendale's question ("How would you feel if you were Miss Honey?") enabled students to come to deeper literary understanding by encouraging students to place themselves in Miss Honey's situation (Sipe, 2000). Although Mia's contribution here seems to be seen as less appropriate because it warranted gentle redirection from Mrs. Mackendale, it was still considered a valid and acceptable position to take (Wiseman,

2011). Mrs. Mackendale's restating of Mia's comment communicated that a "school appropriate" language choice was part of the tacit and nuanced expectations for participation within this context (Erickson, 2001). This coaching provided Mia a more formal and appropriate way to express herself within this context. Mrs. Mackendale's acceptance of Mia's ideas here were important because the phrases she used represented Mia's unique interpretation of the text. Sipe (1999) argues that being allowed to make a story one's own through interpretation, as Mia was encouraged to do here, is both empowering and transformative. He further suggests that discussions such as the one above may act as a catalyst for students to view life, both in story and reality, in new and creative ways. Thus, the opportunities provided to Mia here are important in helping her develop an aesthetic, playful, and transformative view of literature.

The following excerpt is similar in that Mia offered a response in which she evaluated the text by imagining what she might do as one of the characters. In this example, the class had discussed how the discovery of Matilda's powers might affect her life. Many students made predictions about what Matilda might do with her "powers," considering both her mental giftedness and her telekinesis (e.g., move away from her parents). Mia joined the conversation to tell what she might do if she were to discover she had magical powers like those of Matilda.

Mia: I would use it (Matilda's powers) for like problem solving.

Mrs. Mackendale: In what way? How would that help you solve problems?

Mia: Like for problem solving like if you were mad at someone to calm your anger, like if someone did something to you, you could make something bad happen to them to calm your anger. [*Matilda* Transcript, October 5, 2012]

Here Mia responded in a way that demonstrated she had an understanding that *Matilda*'s powers held great implications for revenge and retribution. Mrs. Mackendale asked Mia to extend her answer by providing more specific information that added clarity to her position. The teacher's clarification effort helped Mia define her conception of "power" as a tool for retribution. Further, Mrs. Mackendale provided an opportunity for Mia to deepen her original contribution by providing a clearer explanation about her thinking (Sipe, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). The extension prompted by Mrs. Mackendale encouraged Mia to more coherently connect her thinking to the text, thus deepening the intertextual connection she made and expanding upon her interpretation.

Mia's participation during whole group discussions might be characterized as collaborative and relevant. Her contributions helped her and others build meaning that was important to the growth and development of the conversation. At times, Mia stepped into the text, demonstrating cogent comprehension. When she shared these responses, she added complexity to discussions by demonstrating the potential for connection with character experiences (Rosenblatt, 1938; 1995). Such expressions of empathy and living through characters may act as a springboard for developing awareness of others' lived experiences, something many students in this class didn't do without prompting.

Mia in Small Groups

Mia was an active participant in both book clubs, speaking multiple times at each meeting. Her first book club included Alex, Maria, and Jason. This group elected to meet at a table in the classroom. Her second book club was made up of Alex, Jerry, and Noah, and they read *The Indian in the Cupboard* (Banks, 1980), the controversial story of a 'portal' cupboard that brings toy figures placed inside to life, allowing a cowboy of the Old West to confront a stereotypical Indian. The story traces the experiences of nine-year-old protagonist, Omri, as he tries to reconcile the tension between the two toys the cupboard brought to life (a cowboy and a Native American). This text was a challenge for the group because the characters spoke in dialects that were difficult to decode (e.g. “No reason dance,” and “You jest put me down, son, ya hear? I ain’t sharin’ m’vittles...” (Banks, 1980). However, like the others in the group, Mia reported liking the story [Small Group Interview, December 5, 2012].

In both of Mia’s small groups, the longest, most connected conversations arose after students posed questions related to the story. Often these questions called the group members to evaluate or reevaluate the story as though they were participants in the narrative. This type of engagement acted as a platform for creative expression that enabled students to hear different interpretations of texts (Sipe, 2008) as well as gave students opportunities to re-author and change stories in personal ways. When Mia elected to answer these questions, she often drew on textual evidence and her background knowledge to explore and express literary understandings and interpretations (Morrow & Smith, 1990). However, the small group seemed to be a place where Mia more directly

drew on her transparent responses to texts as a way of collaboratively constructing meaning through discussions.

Mia Offering Interpretations

When Mia elected to answer students' questions, she often did so in a straightforward manner that positioned her as a more knowledgeable other among the group (Vygotsky, 1978). These contributions were typically interpretive but were focused on explaining something to her group members. Mia frequently drew on the text itself or intertextual (text-to-text) connections in objective and distanced ways. For instance, in the following example, the group discussed a story in which the body of a dead man mysteriously disappeared from a morgue. Maria asked a question about the episode in which a guard returned to his post to find an opened window and no body. Mia stepped in to offer a possible explanation as to what might have happened.

Maria: Why did you you (sic) think the window got opened?

Mia: I think the window got opened because the person wasn't really dead and the person wanted to escape and didn't want to be buried, and didn't wanted to be dead. [*Winterton's Spirit* Transcript, October 25, 2012]

In this example, Mia directly answered a Maria's question in a way that helped clarify a mystery in the story. She directly attended to Maria's question of "why" the window was opened in the second clause of her response (because the person wanted to escape and didn't want to be dead), but had previously added relevant information that clarified both Maria's question and the mystery in the story (the person was not really dead, thus the

window was opened by the man thought to be dead). Her response appears to be intent on analyzing and interpreting the text in a way that directly responded to Mia's question. This type of response is often considered the most functional in terms of children coming to more complete narrative understandings of text (Sipe, 2008).

Mia also drew on her background knowledge as a way to explain things to other students. For instance, as Mia's group discussed *The Indian in the Cupboard*, the group came to a section in which Little Bear, the Native American character, threatens to scalp Boone. In the story, the author stereotypically characterizes Boone, the cowboy character, as having guns, while Little Bear is written as having only bows and arrows and his bare hands with which to fight. When Boone realizes that he has more technologically advanced weapons, he decided that the fight would not be fair, and so refuses to fight. Noah initiated the following talk by asking an analytic question about the meaning of the word "scalp" when it is used in its verb form.

Noah: Why do they call it a scalp?

Mia: They cut off this part of your head (pointing to the top of her head)
and they rip it off...

Noah: Ugh...

Mia: That's what it said...

Jerry: Okay, my turn.

Mia: No, I'm not done, the fact that the cowboy wanted it to be fair,
made me feel like he is not the bad guy. Um, when they scalp

someone, they hold your hair down and they peel that off. [*The Indian in the Cupboard* Transcript, November 16, 2012]

This excerpt illustrates two features of Mia's talk. First, Mia's first turn and the second part of her second turn demonstrate the ways in which Mia drew on a hermeneutic impulse to help herself and others gain basic understandings of texts (Sipe, 2008). Similar to her participation in the whole group, Mia attempted to use her background knowledge to help clarify ambiguous information in texts (defining an unfamiliar vocabulary word). Second, Mia's construction of the cowboy illustrates the ways in which she drew interpretations by categorizing information into preexisting cognitive understandings about characters (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Sipe, 2008). This second, evaluative feature of Mia's contributions to small group settings is the focus of the next subsection.

Objectifying Textual Experiences to Evaluate

In both of Mia's small groups, students frequently asked questions that projected themselves into the pages of the stories. In response to this type of question, Mia analyzed texts by blurring the lines between the text world and her own, considering the implications particular plot sequences might have if they occurred in reality. When she took on this stance, Mia's responses seemed transparent in that she relied heavily on her background knowledge as a way of extending textual elements (characters, settings, conflicts) to evaluate plot sequences and implications of character behavior. For instance, in the example below the group discussed a scene in *The Indian in the Cupboard* (Banks, 1980) in which Omri is pressured by his friend Patrick to bring Boone

to life. Patrick gives Omri the cowboy action figure as a gift in an attempt to persuade him that Little Bear might need companionship. In the story, Omri is tormented over the idea that bringing to life two toys which he has historically cast as enemies in his play might result in dangerous fighting. The group discussed if accepting Patrick's advice was advisable.

Jason: If you were Amery (sic) would you except the gift.

Noah: Yes.

Mia: No, it would kill the Indian. What you have to understand is that they are real people, and...

Noah: Well in real life, the Indian can't come alive, so I would go (makes fighting noises).

Mia: ...they would kill each other. [*The Indian in the Cupboard* Transcript, November 13, 2012]

Mia entered this conversation arguing from a perspective embedded in the pages of the story. She supported her position by stating possible consequences of bringing two enemy toys to life. In this response, Mia seems to be caught up in the narrative of the story, answering as though the events might be currently happening in reality (Langer, 1990). She used the phrase "What you have to understand," leveraging her interpretation of the story as possible. She also used logical reasoning ("it would kill the Indian") as a way to get others to understand and align with her position. Noah resisted Mia's contribution by re-imposing a division between the story world and Mia's attempt to consider the story from the perspective she constructed. Noah communicated a

recognition of the distinction between the story world and reality; thus, his response acted as a justification in ignoring the moral implications of placing Little Bear's character in peril.

The following is similar in that another student's question called Mia to blur the lines between the story world and her own life. In this example, Mia responded by drawing on her background knowledge and the text equally. In the excerpt below, her group discussed a story in which a ghost was particularly fond of tormenting small children. Jason asked the group to consider what they might do if they were confronted by a ghost, to which Mia posed an answer that drew equally on her understanding of the story and reality.

Jason: If you were one of the kids would you fight back?

Alex: Yeah, I'd probably rebel against him.

Jason: I'd yell, DIEEEE...

Mia: What would he do to you? Stab you with his hook? He would go to children abuse (Child Protective Service).

Alex: Well, I know I would kind of... [*By Hook or By Crook* Transcript, October 25, 2012]

In this contribution, Mia demonstrated her awareness that the story world and reality are not hermeneutically sealed (Sipe, 2008). The posing of this question seemed to provide Mia the opportunity to draw the story into present day, rejecting the part that didn't make sense in her world (adults aren't legally allowed to torment children). Instead, she constructed a counter-narrative, creatively altering the story in a way that intertwined the

story world and her own. In her account, Mia drew more heavily on her understanding that adults don't want to be reported to Child Protective Services rather than considering that the adult in this narrative is both deceased and seems to care little about the implications his tormenting has on others. Being asked to consider how she might respond through the eyes of a character provided an opportunity for Mia to consider the ramifications events in the story had for her life (Langer, 1990; Sipe, 2008).

This final example demonstrates the ways in which Mia drew on her understanding of reality to evaluate character traits. In the following excerpt the group discussed a scene in *The Indian in the Cupboard* (Banks, 1980) in which Omri contemplated giving Boone supplies that might be harmful to Little Bear. Alex asked a question that called the group to consider Omri's dilemma by stepping into his character.

Alex: If you Omar (sic), would you risk conflict with Little Bear and the soldier?

Mia: What does that mean?

Alex: 'Cause he made the soldier come alive, if you were...

Noah: I would just bandage him myself, 'cause if he were an Indian, he probably doesn't like anybody.

Alex: Could you reach the little bandages?

Noah: I don't know.

Mia: I wouldn't give him...

Alex: So why did the soldier help bandage Little Bear?

Mia: I think the soldier helped because he was the medical person. I think the soldier helped because it was the right thing to do. [*The Indian in the Cupboard* Transcript, November 16, 2012]

In this example, Mia answered Alex's question by relaying her envisioned understanding of Boone's character as a medical person. She drew on her knowledge of how particular types of people behave (e.g. medical personnel are helpful) as a way of justifying the response she gave to Alex. She didn't attend to the fact that in the story Boone and Little Bear had sworn to be enemies, threatening harm to one another on several occasions. Here, Mia objectified the text in a way that allowed her to consider the role Boone played in the book, reconciling the associations she held for medical personal in the text and in reality (Anderson & Pearson, 1983; Langer, 2001). In this example, Mia displayed the complex relationship she saw between the real world and the text world (Sipe, 2008).

Most of Mia's responses during literature circles were generated in response to other students' questions. The small group context seemed to provide Mia more opportunities to step in and live through characters in ways that demonstrated more complete and complicated understandings of narratives. As shown in the examples above, Mia often considered the implications her responses had for her own life (e.g. arguing that child protective services might save her).

Her main contributions during the small groups were as a person who clarified misconceptions by presenting logical possibilities. She drew on intertextual connections to draw conclusions that supported the claims she made. It was also common for Mia to use her imagination to place herself into stories or to draw stories out into the real world.

Finally, Mia took on a leadership role in the small group setting, regulating conversations in ways that facilitated the following of rules and guidelines as she had interpreted them.

Mia Across Groups

Mia's contributions in both contexts tended to be collaborative, as she often answered questions directly and maintained relevance each turn at talk. She seemed to maintain particular ways of responding that focused on providing information that facilitated her or others' interpretation of the stories. She also critically analyzed story elements in ways that demonstrated thoughtful interpretations of character behavior, although she didn't share these thoughts nearly as often in large group settings. In the whole group, her teachers prompted Mia to expand upon her responses; however, she reported never feeling comfortable sharing in read-aloud settings.

When I asked Mia about the difference in her interaction in large groups and small groups, she said, "I think it's easier for us to agree on things because we are not waiting for 20 people to say no I don't like this day, it's not long enough for me with a smaller group, they can just agree probably easier, won't be a lot of different opinions just a few different opinions" [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]. She went on to describe how she also preferred book clubs "talking to a neighbor" to turn and talk style in the whole groups because she didn't feel pressured to come up with a response and share in such a short amount of time. Perhaps the nervousness she felt to respond quickly and appropriately in the whole group setting resulted in Mia's choice not to participate often. She specifically reported that she felt her response patterns were different across the settings because "someone would end up talking over me or someone

would probably turn into a big argument in the big group. Or we would have to get reminders to be quiet” [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]. It seemed as though Mia believed her time on the carpet was limited by time constraints and the fact that not every student had the opportunity to share [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012]. Mia’s choice not to share in large group settings could be viewed as missed opportunities for the group to understand the unique ways that Mia approached text analysis.

Chapter 6 Discussion and Implications

I entered into this study appreciating the complexity involved in personally and socially constructing responses to literature. I understood group composition (Erickson, 2001), text (Sipe, 2000; 2008), teacher's interactional style (Almasi, 1995; Barrentine, 1996), and sociocultural factors related to identity (Moje & Luke, 2009) as influencing the ways in which children interpret and express ideas about texts. Further, I recognized reading responses as representations of children's predispositions (Rosenblatt, 1935, 1995; 1938). Finally, I viewed talk as a tool that held the potential to shape and reshape conceptions of texts in developmental ways (Vygotsky, 1978). These assumptions guided me to inquire about the nature of talk across two contexts within one classroom space. I hoped to better understand the patterns of talk for groups of children, as well as for individual participants within the groups. My central questions included:

- 1) How does literature discussion vary across two contexts within one classroom?
- 2) In what ways do contextual features of literature discussions (group size and leadership, teaching moves, and text) support meaning-making?

Research up to this point has largely described contexts in which literature was discussed with a steady lens on one group size (small group, large group, or individual response) (e.g. Almasi, 1995; Sipe, 2000; 2002; 2007; 2008). However, few studies have investigated how the same children talked about text when provided opportunities to discuss literature across two settings. Even fewer studies have focused on individual

response patterns of children, recognizing their individual approaches to discussion within and across contexts. Thus, when I entered Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's multiage classroom I initially looked for general patterns of response across the group of children, and then focused in on the approaches to response of four focal students. I grounded my study in sociocultural (Bahktin, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978) and transactional theories of reading response (Iser, 1976; Rosenblatt, 1938; 1995), understanding that talk is a meaning-making tool and that responses to literature represent the predisposition of the reader.

I recognized that Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky designed their reading curriculum on the assumption that all learning happens first on a social plane and is eventually internalized as part of a cognitive repertoire (Vygotsky, 1978). They provided opportunities for children to discuss literature as a whole group, where modeling and strategy instruction could occur, as well as in small groups where children could try out the language and strategies associated with discussions of literature on their own, without direct teacher guidance. Further, I understood Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's goals for these reading contexts to include opportunities for children to respond authentically to texts. This guiding vision created a dynamic in which children expressed and explored their original contributions to text in collaborative social settings in which initial reactions to texts could be explored, built upon, or challenged. In these interpretive communities both teachers and students worked together to construct meaning about ideas that were of importance to various group members.

I used ethnographic methods, taking field notes, recording videos, recording

audio, collecting artifacts from the class (both student and teacher made), and conducting multiple semi-structured interviews within and across both whole group and small group contexts to document and record the events of each context. I drew on interpretive and recursive data analysis techniques, including constant comparative methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1984) and traditions of interactive sociolinguistics (Goffman, 2001; Gumperz, 1982). In the first phase of analysis, I identified the general patterns of reading response across the two kinds of literacy events, whole group (read-alouds) and small group (book clubs), highlighting teacher moves that seemed to support particular participation styles as well as the student talk that surrounded those teacher moves. I identified approaches to response that traversed the contexts, highlighting the function of talk in discussions. For instance, I identified that the use of referential links to connect ideas seemed to be present in both large and small group contexts (e.g. “It’s kind of like what Kelly said...” and “I have a question for Liam.”). I also drew on traditions of interactive sociolinguistics and speech act theory to better understand individual student participation within and across groups. This careful attention to language allowed me to gain insight into the general tacit rules of participation within each context as well as to identify the careful and thoughtfully planned moves teachers made to facilitate and support meaning-making.

This approach to analysis allowed me opportunities to consider the ways in which conversations varied within and across groups in the presence of different teachers, different group compositions, and differing texts. My findings indicate important affordances of both whole group and small group settings, including ways in which the

teachers supported individual students' approaches to response so that conversations built around topics that were important to them. This teacher work dually helped facilitate the construction of student identities as well as maintain fluency, topical coherence, and meaning-making in discussions. Findings also indicate that granting students interpretive authority and engaging with authentic puzzlements seemed to generate the most sustained and focused sequences of connected conversation and collaborative meaning-making across whole group and small group settings. Small groups seemed to afford children complete interpretive freedom and more turns at talk. This setting allowed students to bond over common interpretations and emotional reactions to texts and to try out variations of their approaches to response; however, without the guidance of the teacher, students often discussed only surface levels of textual themes, resulting in misinterpretations and missed opportunities to come to more complex understandings.

I also chose four focal students based on participation style to examine more closely, describing their individual approaches to response across reading contexts. Findings from these individual case studies highlight the ways in which students drew on signature styles in approach to responding to texts in groups. Further, these findings demonstrate the ways individuals' styles functioned within and across groups. Finally, the case studies demonstrate the ways in which the affordances of different contexts functioned for individual students. For instance, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's support of individual approaches allowed Liam to experiment and explore his critical approach to literature in the whole group setting. Similarly, the student-governed feature of the small group seemed to make space for Anna to try out different, more critical

approaches to discussions.

In what follows, I discuss these findings as they relate to and extend existing thinking about discussion related to literature or literature discussions in classrooms. Further, in this chapter I provide insights into how my findings add additional evidence to the literature and theoretical assumptions related to reading response.

Interactive Reading Contexts

Data from this study have demonstrated that there are compelling reasons for teachers to provide interactive and varied reading contexts through which children may experience a multitude of responses to literature. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky offered opportunities in both whole group and small groups for children to take on interpretive authority (Fish, 1980) with which they were encouraged to enter into analytic conversations about texts in self-chosen ways (Aukerman, 2007). The combination of the two contexts allowed students to experience multiple perspectives and interpretations of literature, and created the potential for students to try on different approaches to response across contexts. In this section I discuss the affordances of each context, illustrating the importance of both.

Affordances of the whole group setting. Researchers have suggested that discussions of texts in whole group settings mediate children's interpretations and understandings of what they have read (Sipe, 2008; Wiseman, 2011). Further, studies of read-alouds have historically shown that reading aloud increases children's comprehension of text (Ivey, 2003; Sipe, 2000; 2004), motivation to read (Fisher, Flood, Lapp, & Frey, 2004), and development of reading processes (Lapp & Flood, 2003).

Findings from this study reinforce and extend these assertions by demonstrating the ways in which the interactive read-aloud contexts in Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's classroom afforded children opportunities to come to complete and complex understandings of the shared texts through collaborative meaning-making sessions. This study extends previous conceptions of interactive read-aloud contexts by demonstrating the ways in which Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's relinquished their roles as purveyors of knowledge, positioning themselves as part of the interpretive community and potential meaning makers. This orientation to reading aloud created space for children to express and investigate their initial responses to texts in a social space.

The whole group setting in this classroom was a place where Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky were able to model discussion strategies that facilitated meaning-making in response to children's attempts at unraveling complexity in ways that helped them see alternate (and more reasonable) solutions and judge events as invalid, unbelievable, or inappropriate. Almasi (1995) suggests that students are most substantially engaged when they are asked open-ended questions and permitted opportunities to build responses collaboratively. She argues that when students take on the responsibility for resolving conflicts, they demonstrate a marked commitment to the conversation and to the resolution of socio-cognitive conflicts; however, she contends that this type of exploratory thinking is more limited in the presence of teachers. Data here demonstrate that interactive approaches to reading with students promote the opportunity for students to engage in socio-cognitive conflicts around texts in the presence of the teacher, particularly when teachers position themselves as "possible

knowers” (Aukerman, 2007) in collaboration with students. That is, the teachers in this study, by their speculative stances and demonstrations of interest and engagement related to what students attended to in texts seemed to contribute to students’ willingness to discuss matters of substance in the whole group.

The collaborative orientation of the interactive read-aloud context also made space for students to express and explore authentic questions they had about texts. In fact, the most fruitful (and the lengthiest) conversations in both contexts seemed to occur when texts left compelling gaps, so that readers (teachers and children) could weigh in on their “puzzlements” (Chambers, 1996), often begun when a single discussant expressed a genuine perplexity, inviting others into discussions. In addition to modeling their own thinking, the teachers often followed the students’ leads, seeming to abandon their identified goals so that they might attend to the interests and inferences of the student participants. For instance, in the episode described in Chapter 4 that occurred as the class read *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005), several students asked questions about the war in which the story was set. This particular transcript excerpt demonstrates the ways in which Ms. Sadowksy followed the students’ lead, providing space and support to think through how the context of war affected the sequence of events, and, in this case, the character’s decisions. She provided relevant information that supported students in furthering their understanding about the war and satisfying their curiosity. As with the book itself, Ms. S’s support of truth was ‘tempered.’ Likely, those books were being sheltered from the effects of British bombs. The children were protected from the understanding that their own country was part of the assault on the books. In this case,

teachers' validation of children's stances and the willingness to follow students' lead in relation to topics of interest extended the talk so that students had opportunities to think critically about things that were important to them in the large group.

Perhaps the clearest example of a student-initiated expression of puzzlement is demonstrated in Liam's contribution to the large group discussion when he introduced and called attention to a plot inconsistency in the short story "By Hook or Crook" (Schwartz, 1984). Following Liam's initial expression of dissatisfaction with the plot ("What I think is that this story doesn't really make sense because gold is pretty heavy, right?"), his contributions related to the initial puzzlement, engaging nine different participants, including several who did not often participate in the large group setting. Further, many students took positions supporting and challenging Liam's ideas, thus engaging in collaborative problem solving, often stating reasons supporting their positions. More important, perhaps, Ms. Ramirez, the student teacher, made room for the tussling with this plot element that seemed significant to Liam (and through Liam, to others). This instance illustrates that the ways in which these teachers made room for and encouraged students to speak back to texts, and the ways in which the interactive read-aloud context in Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's classroom allowed space for students to work collaboratively in the presence of and with the teacher to unravel perplexities.

When sociocognitive conflicts arose in the large group, the teachers took the opportunity to validate particular strategies students were using to make meaning, making them visible to others. For instance, it was common for the teachers to restate what

students said, naming the strategy they'd used ("That's a good connection between your life and the story."). Further, in instances when cognitive conflict arose in the presence of the teachers, it was common for the conversation to be guided toward collaborative discussions and respectful argumentation. For instance, when students presented different possibilities, the teachers often said things like, "That's different from what I was thinking," "That's another idea," "That's kind of like...", or "That's another way to look at it." These teacher moves helped clarify the ways in which amalgamations of ideas could come together to develop new understandings about books. Thus, when the teachers were there to interact and facilitate discussion, their contributions acted as scaffolds in developing appropriate strategies for expressing ideas (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

Supporting skill acquisition and discussion strategy in the whole group.

Teacher -guided, whole group literature discussion contexts also seemed to be a place in which the teachers were able to model and directly teach strategies associated with reading comprehension and collaborative discussion. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky reported that their purpose in the large group setting was to teach and model skills associated with reading that might be internalized by the readers in their classroom (Aukerman, 2007). Many have argued that this notion of scaffolding that focuses on teacher intention, omitting student purpose, inhibits a variety of responses that may allow for divergent or nonconventional interpretations of texts (Aukerman, 2007; Clark & Graves, 2005; Pressley, 2002). Searle (1986) critiques the traditional scaffolding model when he suggests "the adequacy of the metaphor implied by scaffolding hinges on the

question of who is constructing the edifice.” Often, the teacher is the builder and the child is expected to accept and occupy a predetermined structure. What we should be doing, Searle contends, is working with children, encouraging them to adapt their own language resources to achieve new purposes they see as important. Building on the notion that teachers should follow student leads, Lewis (1993) notes that when teachers focused on scaffolding towards conventional, strategy-driven conversational interactions around literature, students were inhibited in the types of responses they gave. Aukerman (2007) argues that these constructions of scaffolding are problematic because they lend themselves to a model in which the teacher holds answers and students respond in ways that satisfy those constructions of correctness. Sociocultural theories on which scaffolding models are built (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Wertsch, 1991) may find that this position inhibits students’ use of schema in ways that limit their ability to draw on cultural and linguistic resources that allow them to evaluate texts. Aukerman (2007) argues that taking an evaluative stance towards texts requires the reader to take on a position of knowing, becoming someone who has the authority to make claims about what text means, thus assigning value to texts and authority to the meaning-maker.

Data from this study demonstrated that the two teachers were indeed committed to teaching reading strategies through modeling and overt instruction during whole group reading time. For instance, it was common for the teachers to name particular strategies associated with successful comprehension (e.g. “When you read, it is helpful to know where the author is coming from (interest, attitude, authority), so that you understand the vocabulary they (the author) use(s)...”). However, Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky

seemed to have an expanded notion of what strategies and skills associated with reading were important in supporting children's meaning-making. Specifically, these teachers demonstrated the importance of modeling the language used in building connected conversations as well as modeling how to express and build upon deeply personal responses to texts.

The whole group setting was also a place where the teachers modeled particular strategies related to building conversations about literature. In many cases, the modeling teachers did was related to generating connected strands of conversation (e.g., "That's kind of like what Michael said..." and "Oh, I was thinking something different...") related to events in stories or previous contributions. It was evident that students tried out this 'threading' as they used connective linguistic techniques such as repeating, crediting a speaker, or linking with an idea to tie conversations together in both the whole group and the small group setting. For instance, in their reading of short, scary stories, Adam's first book club often threaded ideas together using connective phrases such as "Yeah, me too..." and "I was thinking about that also." Similarly, when students discussed *Gregor the Overlander* (Collins, 2011), they often positioned their contributions in contrast to one another (e.g., Anna replied "I don't think that..." indicating disagreement.). This threading of ideas created a dynamic that allowed read-aloud and small group spaces to be places where students collaboratively constructed knowledge about the story. For instance, it was common for students to start responses with "It reminds me of when...", or "It's kind of like Ryan's [idea]...". Vestiges of this work to achieve conversational coherence could be seen as children responded in both whole and small group settings. It

was common in both contexts to hear students link conversations back to other students' contributions, and to specifically use the strategies the teachers had taught as they approached discussion.

Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky's approaches to scaffolding extended still further beyond basic comprehension and discussion techniques. These teachers drew on gentle modeling so that students weren't prompted to evaluate texts in a certain way; rather, they were free to express their understandings in ways that allowed for deeply personal responses. In these deeply personal responses, students demonstrated willingness to step into characters and change narratives in ways that were satisfying to them. For instance, Anna often chose to imagine herself as a character who acted in a way that resulted in the story ending happily. Research has suggested that this evaluative stance is important because it prompts children to read through a lens of authenticity rather than responding only to satisfy others. Further, Sipe (2008) argues that the personalizing impulse acts as a catalyst for students to draw on literature as a transformational tool that might facilitate ideological shifts. He goes on to suggest that, if explored, personal responses to texts have the potential to incite readers to engage in social change. This feature of the read-aloud context is explored more fully in the next section.

Modeling and facilitating transactions with texts. Data from this study illustrate that another affordance of interactive read-aloud contexts might be that students are encouraged to engage in personal ways, which facilitate transformational stances towards literature. Ms. Sadowsky and Mrs. Mackendale also modeled analyzing texts in

critical and thoughtful ways, thus scaffolding the acquisition of an evaluative stance towards texts. Transactional theories of reading response, which undergird this dissertation, suggest that as readers examine their responses to texts through the lens of their lived experiences, they are dually encouraged to build knowledge about story structure as well as to consider the implications texts have for their lives. As students were encouraged to make personal connections with their background knowledge, they demonstrated more complete understandings of texts (see, for examples, the displays of understanding in Chapter 4 and below). Sipe (2008) argues that this analytic approach to text is a powerful way, and perhaps the only way, for texts to transform readers.

One example of teachers encouraging students to evaluate texts through aesthetic lenses occurred when Ms. Sadowsky prompted students to consider the illogical behavior of Dr. Fargo in *Chocolate Fever* (Smith, 1976). She helped focus attention on scenarios that might affect their understanding of the story generally, but also of Dr. Fargo as a person/character, of the hero's problem, and of the story as a problem-solution structured narrative. The teachers also asked students to interpret texts by prompting them to step into the story, seeing the world as one of the characters. At times, these sequences of talk were prompted when Mrs. Mackendale or Ms. Sadowsky asked students to think like the character (e.g., "Imagine if you were there...," "what would you do?"). Often, these sequences of talk began with students saying things like, "If I were _____, I would...". Aukerman (2007) theorizes that invitations to evaluate texts create opportunities for students to internalize a type of response that allows for more engaged, culturally responsive comprehension of texts. Data here

demonstrate the ways in which students tried out the transactional strategies modeled by Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky in small group settings. For instance, Mia and Liam took on the role of critical question-asker in the small group setting, encouraging their classmates to imagine themselves as characters (e.g., “If you were a Nazi soldier, would you kill the family?”), and to consider the text from the points of view of the characters (e.g., “What you have to understand is that they are real people, and...”). However, in small groups, the students were met with other challenges that inhibited them from fully exploring the transactional and interactive possibilities of texts.

Affordances of Small Groups

Many researchers have questioned the merits of allowing children to discuss literature outside the presence of the teacher (Almasi, 1995; Almasi, O’Flahaven, & Ayars, 2000; Martinez-Roldan & Robertson-Lopez, 2007; O’Flahaven, 1989; Raphael & McMahan, 1992). Proponents of group discussions that are unencumbered by a teacher argue that such organizations allows for more authentic responses to occur, thus promoting deeper conversations about personally interesting themes (Almasi, 1995; Martinez-Roldan & Robertson-Lopez, 2007). However, others have suggested that the guidance of the teacher facilitates the recognition of deeper levels of understanding related to underlying themes embedded in texts (Evans, 1997; Lewis, 2001; Raphael & McMahan, 1992; 2005; Lehr, 1991). Findings in this study offer support for both assertions in that students in Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky’s class seemed to have more opportunities to discuss and attend to topics of interest, build solidarity over shared interpretations and similar emotional reactions, and try out different approaches to

discussion in small groups; however, at times these conversations were far removed from the deep themes embedded within the texts.

Talk in the small group was, at times, misdirected and seemingly tangential; however, threads of conversations were related to the actual text being discussed. When students discussed literature in small groups, no matter how colloquial the language or seemingly off-topic the discussion, they were demonstrating some level of comprehension and efforts towards making meaning. For instance, on several occasions, Liam's second round of book club discussants stopped to consider what they might do if they were in the place of one of the characters. For instance, Liam asked his *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989) group, "Would you commit suicide?" providing evidence of his understanding of internal character conflict that was alluded to in the text [*Number the Stars* Transcript, November 5, 2012]. Findings from this analysis also support the notion that in small groups, students have more opportunities to talk. Students were also more willing to approach conversation differently, or try on different approaches for response. For instance, Anna demonstrated more willingness to question others' ideas and engage in arguments in the small group setting. Finally, the small group seemed to be a space where children had opportunities to build solidarity in relation to agreed upon interpretations and shared emotional reactions to texts. For instance, when Adam's first literature circle came together to discuss scary stories, they discussed their fears in relation to the text and connected lived experiences.

Similar to the whole group, engaging with puzzlements was also important in generating and sustaining conversations in the small groups. The longest and most

connected episodes of talk were generated when individual students asked questions related to understanding literary elements (e.g., character motivation, moral and ethical dilemmas facing characters). For instance, when discussing a scary story that centered on the disappearance a presumed corpse, Audrey asked the group to consider whether the character believed that the body had been stolen or had really risen from the dead. This question resulted in seven turns at talk connected to Audrey's initial question, all focused on trying to propose possible explanations as to why the body might be missing. Similarly, during Anna's second round of book clubs, in which her group discussed *Gregor the Overlander* (Collins, 2011), a nine-turn sequence followed Gavin's query through which he attempted to uncover how a character ended up in the remote underworld described in Collins' (2011) *Gregor the Overlander*. Gavin initiated the conversation by puzzling over, "How did she get there...?" which initiated several turns in which his group-mates defended criticisms of the plot (e.g., "You can't just teleport there..."). Many of these small contributions resulted in participants filling in holes in the story by conjecturing what could have been (e.g., Anna's reasoned, "Well maybe it was underground, so she fell through the hole...") [Gregor the Overlander Transcript, November 13, 2012].

When given opportunities to explore puzzlements in small discussion groups (four to five children), students often reproduced the strategies they had practiced with teachers in the large group, such as drawing on intertextual connections and using the social features of arguments, including providing reasoned supported for claims. As they attempted to clarify and build cases for their contributions to these collaborative

meaning-making sessions, Audrey, for example, thickened the understanding when she added, “What happens in a lot of stories when people rise from the dead [is]...” and Adam brought in his genre experience: “This is a hero story, so I don’t think the dog will die” [*Sounder* Transcript, November 5, 2012]. Meaning-making around genuine ‘wonderings’ allowed students to engage in sustained, collaborative problem solving discussions in both whole and small groups.

However, the absence of the teacher did create some missed opportunities for students to discuss the most salient themes in the stories they read. For instance, the group that discussed *Sounder* (Anderson, 1967) argued extensively about the setting of the story, trying to decide if the characters were slaves. This argument demonstrated the ways in which the group attempted to work collaboratively through a misconception in ways that promoted extensive explanation and the use of textual proof to justify claims. However, their focused attention on the race of the characters took away from potential discussions that could have evolved into a discussion about injustices based on racial segregation and oppressions. A teachers’ presence in this space may have facilitated such a discussion. Similarly, there were times in the small group setting when students responded in ways that led to the degradation of conversational integrity. For instance, when Liam suggested that he might “go up and kiss” the Nazi soldier who was hunting Annemarie in *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 2011), members of the group began laughing and suggesting other outlandish solutions. Eventually this conversation resulted in Liam reenacting a war scene in which he engaged in a fistfight with a soldier, who eventually shot him (Liam’s character). While the enactment was tangentially related to the text, it

precluded the group from talking about the human themes (morality, fear, integrity) embedded in the chapters the group was to be discussing.

At the culmination of data collection, I organized small group interviews with each of the book clubs. I inquired about the nature of discussion, and many told me that they “discussed the same things” (Anna) in both small and large groups [Small Group Interview, November 16, 2012] They saw very little shift in the type of conversations they had. However, when I inquired about the type of conversational techniques they used, the students recognized that they approached conversation differently in the large group than they did in the small group. Specifically, Carter indicated that he saw book clubs as “just a bunch of friends goofing off” [Small Group Interview, December 6, 2012]. He went on to suggest that some of the themes and scenarios present in the text were “...just too sad, so we had to be silly” [Small Group Interview, November 17, 2012] Further, the emergence of students who felt the need to regulate talk described in Chapter 4 is also indicative of the need for a guiding presence in the small group settings. The fact that Audrey, Kelly, Mia, Jessica, and Selina stepped in and took on supporting roles indicated that there was a need to regulate turn taking and ensure that the conversation maintained “on topic” conversation. Perhaps the emergence of a student to maintain order and guide conversation illustrates the need for a teacher’s presence when discussing particular types of texts or when hoping for book clubs to facilitate the acquisition of deeper or more complete understandings about texts. This is not to say, however, that teacher participation in groups should be restricted to rigidly structured interactional styles, as they were in Almasi’s (1995) study; rather, teachers might participate in small

groups in an interactional style very similarly to that of an interactive read-aloud, following students' leads and providing supporting information and guidance when needed.

Supporting signature styles. Research has long suggested that responses are generated as reverberations of the interactive environment in which they are constructed (Almasi, 1995; Erickson, 2005; Sipe, 2008). The findings from this study confirm the notion that a complex network of factors related to social, emotional, and academic needs influenced the choices students made in responding to literature within the classroom. Further, behaviors are enacted based upon the historical and cultural understandings of the contexts in which these behaviors occur (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, one might expect to see shifts in the ways in which students participate in discussions of literature across contexts. However, research and theory have also suggested that ways in which children respond to texts (including images) represent emotional insights into past experiences (Rosenblatt, 1938; 1995), thus contending that there might be a stability in relation to the ways in which individuals respond to certain texts across spaces. Indeed, data from this study indicate that certain elements of students' responses remained stable within and across contexts.

This study confirms the notion that an element of stability related to historical constructions of identity positions remained as students traversed contexts. While discussion contexts change (group size) the context of the classroom is the same. While it was true that student approaches to responses were different (e.g. they were more willing to use colloquial language and played with ideas more), the deep structure and

function of response patterns remained relatively stable across groups. This is not to say that the form of the language did not vary; rather the force and function of what was said remained stable within the case studies. For example, Anna chose to insert more explanation and offered criticism during book club meetings; however, the function of her responses remained positive and constructive in both large and small group settings. Similarly, many of Liam's responses functioned as criticisms of texts in both whole group and small group settings.

In whole group settings, the teachers were able to artfully navigate conversations so that divergent contributions or misinterpretations were incorporated into the conversation and recognized as valid approaches to discussion. Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky appear to have recognized the ways in which students attempted to join conversations in particular ways, and supported their attempts at being particular types of responders, making space for these approaches in the whole group setting. For instance, Liam's approaches to whole group discussions involved offering critical challenges to texts that led to cognitive conflicts in the whole group setting. Recognizing his propensity for this type of response, both Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowsky followed Liam's lead, making space for him to engage in arguments and critical discussions in ways that were satisfying to him. Similarly, Anna's contributions were often met with positive reinforcement and support. The presence of both Anna and Liam's contributions were important for other students in that without Liam, students may not have had opportunities to experience critical arguments or had exposure to critical approaches to

text. Without Anna, students may not have had opportunities to understand how one might step in and alter texts in ways that were satisfying to them.

Research has also demonstrated that the type of text plays an important role in determining the types of responses children produce in the presence of text (Panteleo, 2007; Sipe & Brightman, 2005). However, it was evident in this study that within narrative genres, the students in Mrs. Mackendale and Ms. Sadowksy's class often exhibited response patterns that served the same function. For instance, when analyzing Adam's talk through the lens of his personal experiences, it becomes evident that his responses tended to relate to emotional reactions to particular scenes in texts (e.g. discussing fears, or providing information about cancer to the group). Adam's response style could be described as being emotional in that his identification with texts and conversations were directly related to something that caused him stress personally (e.g. his mother's cancer or his anxiety about being alone in his bedroom at night). Conversations about these things were cathartic and emotionally satisfying for Adam. Similarly, Liam tended towards responding in ways that might position him as an authority on things about which he spoke. Thus, responses to text are individual and largely cannot be predicted without deep knowledge of the responder personally.

The data here confirms that in large group settings children tended towards familiar and comfortable response patterns despite the text genre or composition of group, and that children drew on their "signature style" between contexts as well. For instance, Liam's propensity to provide information that made him appear as an expert appeared in both large group and small group contexts. While the approaches remained

similar, students were met with various reactions to their responses in the small groups. At times other students collaborated with individual approaches to response. However, students seemed to disengage from conversations when they felt their signature style was being challenged or called into question. For instance, Audrey called Liam's expertise into question and positioned Ryan as more of an expert in their discussion of *Number the Stars* (Lowry, 1989). Similarly, Noah confronted Mia's propensity towards expressing transparent responses in the small group by instituting a break between the story world and the real world ("Well in real life, the Indian can't come alive..."). Although there is little data here to support the notion that these challenges to responses nudged students to revise their approaches to response, there does seem to be some evidence that when challenges to responses were presented, students disengaged from the conversation (e.g. Liam's rolling around on the floor and Mia's withdrawal from the conversations upon being challenged).

Implications for Further Research

The responses of children to literature have received much attention from researchers in the recent past (e.g. Roser, Martinez, & Wood, 2008; Sipe, 2000; 2002; 2008). However, there are still questions to be asked about the relationship between children's responses to literature and their identities. This study demonstrates stability in relation to how children respond to literature across contexts. Researchers may take up and further investigate the function of signature response patterns for individuals, groups, and interpretive communities. Future studies may also develop more complete understandings about the nature of signature response styles if reading lives of children

outside of school are also considered as researchers identify and describe response patterns. Additionally, the naturalistic nature of the present study did not allow me to control for the type of text or design of either reading context. Future studies may benefit from controlling for different elements of the contexts (e.g. text genre, discussion strategies, approaches to discussion) to determine how different elements might affect the nature of responses.

Implications for Practice

Data here seems to support the notion that providing students opportunities to engage in multiple and varied contexts in which they might discuss literature is important. For instance, Anna and Adam demonstrated a willingness to engage differently and more completely when they were outside the presence of the teacher. However, this study also indicates a need for teachers to design and facilitate small group contexts so that they remain productive. Evidence here seems to indicate careful book choices; topics, themes, and text features (vocabulary, decoding knowledge, and sentence structure) are all important things to consider when organizing for small group settings. Further, preparation for small group discussions seems to have roots in large group discussions, as students exhibited similar threading and conversational techniques across whole and small groups. However, students seemed to need more tools related to how to begin and maintain conversations related to texts in small group settings. Teaching students how to engage with authentic puzzlements seems a promising way to encourage productive small group conversations.

Second, this study calls for teachers to expand their construction of interactive read-aloud contexts to include discussions in which students collaboratively construct and reconstruct meaning, as well as engaging with opportunities to model approaches to discussion while at the same time facilitating more complete and complex comprehension of texts. Interactive read-aloud contexts seem to be a place in which teachers might help children to develop and understand the implications of individual styles of response. This orientation towards interactive read-alouds calls teachers to pay close attention to the kinds of work students do as they make meaning.

With knowledge of how and why students might respond in particular ways, teachers may be empowered to help them develop more complete awareness of their own reasons behind responses and insight into others' interpretations. Rosenblatt (1935; 1938, 1995) has long been criticized for not recognizing the importance of deconstructing text as a way to develop critical awareness of one's own position (a point she refutes in several of her later writings). The ways in which conversations may be developed through and around signature response patterns has the potential to help students develop stances of empathy towards characters in stories and other interlocutors. Further, lifting up and examining the ways in which particular students respond could serve as another way to highlight strategic development of conversational tools.

Limitations

This study had a few limitations related to design and data collection. First, the short amount of time spent in the classroom restricted the amount of data collected. Had I spent a longer amount of time in the classroom, I could have collected more instances of

read-aloud and small group discussions of literature, which could have provided more insight and specificity related to the patterns of talk in the contexts generally. Extending my time in the classroom also could have afforded me the opportunity to gather more examples of focal students' talk, which might have made their nuanced patterns of participation more clear. Similarly, a more prolonged engagement might have allowed me more opportunities to discuss the contexts with the participants, which would have increased my understanding of the contexts from the perspective of the participants.

This study was also limited by the availability of technology. Throughout data collection, I had access to one camera, which collected all read-alouds and then certain small groups. I video recorded as many small groups as possible; however, at times multiple small groups occurred at one time. To account for the small groups that weren't being video recorded, I used audio recorders so that talk could be collected. More video cameras would have allowed me to capture meaning-making cues beyond the talk itself. Specifically, video recordings might have caught facial expressions, body postures, and physical manifestations of response that were important in discussions. Additionally, having more cameras to record different angles of the read-alouds might have afforded me the ability to capture the discussion from the perspective of particular students.

A final set of limitations is related to the naturalistic design of the study. As a participant observer, I didn't interfere with any classroom decision making; hence, I did not select or influence book choices. All of the books read through the duration of this study were narrative fiction. Collecting talk on various book genres (e.g. informational,

procedural, poetry, etc...) might have added complexity and more in-depth understanding of how meaning is constructed in both contexts.

Conclusion

I want to conclude by reflecting on why studying talk about literature is important. This type of work contributes to a research base that strongly supports the use of talk as a tool to support cognitive, social, and emotional development in classrooms. In a test-driven society, many researchers have reported that talk in classrooms has been reduced to test preparation, focusing on helping students develop language related to decoding tests. Reducing discussions of literature solely to the preparation to pass certain standardized tests ignores the possibility that literature might be a transformative tool in the lives of young learners. Further, developing a community of young learners who equate reading with test taking limits the opportunity for children to find literature individually and personally satisfying, thus carrying them away from lives as readers. As Sipe (2000) eloquently wrote, “every child stitches together a view of reality made of many texts, and stories may figure into the bricolage that each of us produces. This is the real work of life” (p. 88). To ignore the opportunity for children to find satisfaction in reading by limiting the potential for self-recognition through the pages of a text restricts the development of empathic, thoughtful communities of thinkers.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Teacher Interview Questions

Why do you offer different contexts in which your students read? (why do you read aloud? Why do you offer book clubs? Why do you offer Turn and Talks?)

How do these spaces work together to form your reading program? Are there benefits to each context that others don't afford? Are there draw backs to each context?

Which context do you think the kids like best? Which context do you think kids like least? (Why on both)

What are the goals for Turn and Talks?

How do you decide when to do turn and talks vs. letting kids share aloud?

What type of questions generate the most responses for turn and talk? (what makes kids talk the most?).

How do you decide who shares aloud during read alouds?

Which kids share the most? Which kids share the least? Why do you think that is?

Are there students you are hesitant to call on during read alouds? If so, why?

When kids share during read alouds, how do you decide what ideas to take up and what ideas to move on from?

Can you give an example of a time when kids had a conversation about a topic that was uncomfortable for you to talk about? How did that conversation start, and what was the outcome of that conversation?

Can you give an example of a time the students argued about an idea during read alouds? What was that argument about? What was your role during this argument, and what was the outcome of that conversation/ argument?

Do you see a difference in the ways kids respond to you both and Ms. Romero during read alouds? If so could you give an example and describe?

What are the goals of book clubs?

What kind of things do kids talk about during book clubs?

Do you ever see evidence of what kids talk about during book clubs be brought up during read alouds? If so, could you give an example?

What did you learn from looking at kids book club journals?

Can you give an example of a time the students argued about an idea during book clubs? What was that argument about? What was your role during this argument, and what was the outcome of that conversation/ argument?

How often during the year do you have book clubs? Do book club groups change each time?

How do you prepare kids for tests (standardized tests)? How do these three contexts facilitate or support getting kids ready for tests?

How do you feel that the three contexts you provide for your students (read aloud, book clubs and turn and talks) prepare kids to take reading tests?

How do you decide which questions go on the language chart?

Student Interviews

Do you enjoy reading? If so what is your favorite thing about reading?

Which story did you most enjoy reading in class (book club or whole group)? Why was that story your favorite?

Which story did you least enjoy reading in class (book club or whole group)? Why was that your least favorite?

Do you have a favorite book? If so, what is it and why is it your favorite?

Do you like talking about books? Why/Why not?

Do you like read-alouds or book clubs better? Why?

Are there differences between read alouds and book clubs? If so, what are they? If not, how are they alike?

What do you talk about when you're in small groups?

Appendix B: Books Read as Read Alouds

Whole Group Read Alouds	Description	Dates Read
<i>The Librarian of Basra: A True Story From Iraq</i> (2005). J. Winter	A story based on the life of Alia Muhammad Baker, a librarian who attempted to save the books in her Library in a war torn Iraq.	September 5, 2012
<i>Weslandia</i> (2002). P. Fleischman	The story of Wesley, a boy who enticed a group of bullies into friendship by displaying ingenuity in creating his own civilization.	September 13, 2012
<i>Chocolate Fever</i> (1972). R. Smith	A novel about Henry, a boy who eats so much chocolate that he develops a chocolate rash all over his body.	September 19, 2012 September 20, 2012 September 21, 2012
<i>Matilda</i> (1988). R. Dahl	A novel about a young girl, Matilda, who learns to use her newly found telekinetic powers to navigate uncomfortable life situations.	October 1, 2012 October 5, 2012 October 6, 2012 October 8, 2012 October 10, 2012 October 12, 2012 October 17, 2012 October 18, 2012 October 19, 2012
<i>The Always Prayer Shawl</i> (1997). S. Oberman	The story of a Jewish boy growing up in Czarist Russia. The story describes the ways in which the main character, Adam, seeks comfort in the traditional teachings of his grandfather, as he nervously prepares to move to the Americas.	December 7, 2012
<i>Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark</i> (1981). A. Schwartz	A collection of short, ghost stories.	October 24, 2012 October 25, 2012
<i>Dumpling Soup</i>	The story of a Hawaiian	December 3, 2012

(1998).Rattigan	girl, Marisa, learning about a family tradition of making dumplings as part of a New Year's Eve celebration.	
<i>A Crack in the Wall</i> (1998) Haggerty.	The story of a boy, Carlos, who moves from a home into a dilapidated apartment that has a huge crack in the wall at Christmas time. In the story, Carlos uses foil gum wrappers, fashioned like Christmas tree ornaments, to transform the crack into a tree mural that becomes a Christmas gift for his overburdened mother.	December 6, 2012
<i>Sadako</i> (1997). E. Coerr	A story based on the life of Sadako, a child who suffers and ultimately dies from cancer after being exposed to radiation when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.	December 12, 2012
<i>Just in Time for Christmas</i> (2000) Lewin	A story depicting one family's holiday traditions including candy making, decorating trees, and spending time with family. In the story, the celebration is almost ruined when a family dog runs away.	December 17, 2012
<i>Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins</i> (1994) E. Kimmel	A story about a group of hobgoblins that interfere with the lighting of a town's menorah every Hanukkah season. In the story, the hero, Hershel, takes on the challenge of lighting the menorah,	December 19, 2012

	realizing he will have to find a clever way to defeat the goblins.	
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Appendix C: Books Read in Small Groups

Small Group Literature	Description	Group Participants	
<i>Souder</i> (1969) W. Armstrong	A Newberry Award-winning novel that traces the struggles of an African American family in the 19 th century South.	Adam, Selina, Maria, and Javier	
<i>The Indian in the Cupboard</i> (1980). L. Banks	A controversial novel telling the story of a “portal” cupboard that brings toy figures placed inside to life, allowing a cowboy of the Old West to confront a stereotypical Indian. The story traces the experiences of nine-year-old protagonist, Omri, as he tries to reconcile the tension between the two toys the cupboard brought to life (a cowboy and a Native American).	Mia, Alex, Noah, and Jerry	
<i>Gregor the Overlander</i> (2004). S. Collins	A fantasy novel about a boy, Gregor and his baby sister, Boots, who accidentally fall down a laundry chute to discover a secret underworld of New York City.	Anna, Jessica, Gavin, and Joseph	
<i>Number the Stars</i> (1989). L. Lowry	A novel about a Jewish family’s struggles in escaping war-torn Nazi Germany	Liam, Audrey, Ryan, and Carter	
<i>Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark</i> (1981). A. Schwartz	A collection of short, ghost stories.	Adam, Noah, Gavin, and Jessica	Mia, Alex, Maria, and Jason
		Liam, Zachary, Kelly, and Carla	Anna, Javier, and Melissa

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